

## 16 tourists kidnapped in Yemen

SANAA (AP) — Yemeni tribesmen kidnapped 16 Western tourists Monday, including 12 Britons, two Americans and two Australians, tribal leaders and security officials said. They said about 10 armed tribesmen opened fire on a number of policemen escorting a group of 17 tourists as they traveled in a convoy of 15 vehicles near the southern town of Mawdiyah, in the Abyan province. Abyan is about 200 kilometers south of the capital, Sanaa. No one was injured in the firefight, but a British tourist and a Yemeni guide managed to escape, said the tribal leaders, speaking on condition of anonymity. The remaining 16 tourists were abducted and driven to an unknown destination in Abyan, they added. They gave no other details and said the kidnappers' demands were not immediately known. Security officials, also speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed the kidnappings but could not provide any details.

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## Palestinian gets life sentence for driving bombers

TEL AVIV (AP) — An Israeli military court sentenced a Palestinian to life imprisonment Monday for driving two suicide bombers to a busy intersection, where they killed another 22 people. On Jan. 22, 1995 — a Sunday — Abdul Halim Balbisy drove the suicide bombers to the Beit Lid intersection north of Tel Aviv where they blew themselves up, minutes apart, the court said. The Islamic Jihad group claimed responsibility for the attack.

## Iraqi satellite TV back on the air

NICOSIA (AFP) — The Iraqi Satellite Channel was back on the air Monday after a 12-day interruption in its broadcasts because of the U.S.-British air strikes on Iraq. The satellite station, which was set up July 17, and Iraq's Al Shebab, or Youth, TV stopped broadcasting December 16, the first day of Operation Desert Fox. Al Shebab went back on the air Saturday night. The Iraqi Satellite Channel uses Egypt's NileSat-101 satellite, launched last April.

## Tibi's movement to run for Knesset

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Ahmad Tibi's Arab Renewal Movement has decided to run a list of candidates for the upcoming elections, the Israeli daily Haaretz reported on Monday. Tibi, a senior adviser to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and an Israeli citizen, set up his party on the eve of the last national elections in 1996 but withdrew his candidacy at the last minute. At a meeting Sunday the movement decided to run a list of candidates for elections, but had not yet decided who will head it, the report said. Tibi said he had not yet decided whether to run himself.

## Five die in Iran ship blast in Gulf

TEHRAN (R) — Five crew members were killed and 10 injured in an explosion at the weekend on board an Iranian naval tanker ship, the official IRNA news agency said on Monday. The agency said the cause of the blast on Saturday, at a jetty in the Gulf port of Bandar Abbas in Hormuzgan province, remained under investigation.

## Sudan: NGOs serving hostile political ends

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudan on Monday accused western non-governmental organisations (NGOs) of mixing politics with humanitarian work in the south of the country. "Some NGOs conceal political purposes in their humanitarian activity, to serve the political ends of countries hostile to the Sudanese cultural [Islamic] orientation," Sudanese Minister of State for Social Planning Major General Hassan Osman Dhahawe said. Dhahawe, quoted by the official news agency SUNA, also rejected as "baseless" a news report citing French group Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders) as estimating that last July some 120 people died each day in Ajaj, a town in the Blue Nile state in South Sudan.



A file picture dated May 1998 shows two U.S. F-16C fighter falcon, U.S. warplanes opened fire on an Iraqi anti-aircraft site on Monday, killing four soldiers and wounding seven others in the first major clash since a four-day air war ended (AFP photo)

## Meeting of Arab foreign ministers postponed to January

CAIRO (AFP) — Deeply divided over policy towards Iraq, Arab foreign ministers postponed until next month on Monday a meeting which had been set to be held here this week.

Arab League Secretary General Essad Abdul Meguid said the meeting of Arab foreign ministers scheduled to be held here on Wednesday had been delayed until January 24. "The meeting has been delayed at the request of the countries of the Gulf Cooper-

ation Council (GCC)," said the Arab League chief. However, one GCC member came out in favour of going ahead with the meeting as planned.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) supported the Yemeni request to convene an Arab summit and did not ask for the ministerial meeting to be delayed, a UAE foreign ministry official told the official WAM news agency. The news agency also said that GCC foreign ministers

are to meet in Riyadh on Tuesday. "The meeting aims to consider the current situation in the Arab World, notably the holding of an Arab summit," WAM said.

UAE Foreign Minister Rashid Abdullah would chair the session of the six GCC members — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia as well as the UAE. Arab foreign ministers had been summoned to Cairo at Yemen's request to consider

holding an Arab summit to discuss the situation in Iraq following the four days of U.S.-British air strikes. The Arab League's highest body is the council of foreign ministers. It does not have the power itself to convene summits.

The last summit, which focused on relations with Israel, was held here in June 1996, without the participation of Iraq, which was not invited. It is the only one to have been held since Iraq's

1990 invasion of Kuwait. Objections to a summit now have been led by GCC member Saudi Arabia, whose foreign minister, Prince Saud Al Faisal, made a secret visit to Cairo on Sunday to discuss the issue.

He met both Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Foreign Minister Amr Musa and had several hours of talks with them, Arab diplomats said. (Continued on page 12)



Israeli soldiers drag away Hussam Abu Yacoub and take one of his sons from him as his family is physically removed from their home in the West Bank village of Kifl Harith before the army demolished the building on Monday (Reuters photo)

## Israel demolishes 2 W. Bank homes, setting off clashes

KUFR HARIS (AP) — Israeli soldiers on Monday dragged a Palestinian family out of a home slated for destruction and wrestled the 26-year owner to the ground as he clutched his toddler son and tried to block the troops. The child fell to the ground in the melee and the owner, Hussam Abu Yacoub, had blood running down his right temple. Troops eventually fired tear gas into the one-story home, forcing the remaining residents out. After the struggle, Abu Yacoub's home and another house in the village were levelled by bulldozers. In response, dozens of villagers hurled stones at the troops who responded

with more tear gas and rubber-coated steel pellets. Two Israelis were injured by stones. Peter Lerner, spokesman of the Israeli military government in the West Bank, said the two homes in the village were demolished because they were built illegally, without proper permits. Palestinians complain that Israel uses house demolitions as a political tool and refuses to issue building permits in areas of the West Bank it wants to keep under its control. The United States also opposes the practice, saying it undermines trust. Monday's confrontation took place in Kuf Haris, a village close to the Jewish settlement of Ariel, the

second largest in the West Bank. Abu Yacoub, his wife and two young sons, along with about 30 others, sat on the floor of the house to try to prevent the demolition. However, Israeli troops dragged them out. Abu Yacoub was knocked to the ground in the melee, dropping his young son as villagers and family members continued to scuffle with Israeli soldiers. "One day I'm going to take revenge...I will teach my kids the way of Hamas," Abu Yacoub screamed at one Israeli officer, referring to the Islamist group that has carried out more than a dozen suicide bombings in Israel.

## Kuwait hails call by Regent to free all Arab POWs

AMMAN (J.T.) — Kuwait on Monday hailed a call by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, made on Sunday for the release of Kuwaiti prisoners of war (PoWs) held in Iraq. Petra news agency reported from Kuwait. "Kuwait paid tribute to Prince Hassan's principled stand towards the Kuwaiti prisoners issue," Petra said. In his opening address before the emergency session of the Arab Parliamentary Union held here Sunday, the Crown Prince referred to Kuwaiti prisoners of war and called for putting an end to their and the suffering of all Arab prisoners of war. The Kuwaiti news agency KUNA, quoted the First Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah as saying: "We would

like to express our thanks and appreciation to Prince Hassan and wish him and the Jordanian people, on the occasion of the New Year, a happy and prosperous life." Prince Hassan called for exerting honest, sincere and transparent efforts to ensure the release of all Arab prisoners of war. "In the context of our solidarity with the Iraqi people, we would like to see its prisoners of war released. Similarly, we would like to see all Arab prisoners of war return home. As long as there is a single Arab prisoner of war or a missing soldier who has not returned home in Kuwait or any other Arab or Islamic state, our duty dictates that we should exert honest, sincere and transparent efforts in order to put an end to this tragic situation," the Regent said.

## Israeli parties agree to May 17 election date

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel's major parties set May 17 as an election date on Monday, a sign that a threat by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to declare statehood before then has receded and will not influence the campaign. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had wanted to set the elections for before May 4 — Arafat's deadline — in order to maximise the threat of Palestinian statehood in his hard-line campaign. "We agreed on the 17th of May," said Meir Shetreet, a senior government legislator, after a day of negotiations with the opposition Labour party. "It must pass the law committee and the Knesset next week, but there is wide support, so there's no reason why it shouldn't." Netanyahu has recently emphasised the threat of Palestinian independence — May 4 is the five-year deadline for a final peace agree-

ment, under the Oslo accords — countering with a threat to annex parts of the West Bank. "Arafat knows if he declares a Palestinian state unilaterally, it means cancelling Oslo," Netanyahu threatened Sunday, opening the elections campaign. Netanyahu sees statehood as posing a security threat to Israel. But Arafat, fearful of helping hard-liner Netanyahu to power, indicated Monday he was backing down from his intention to declare statehood on May 4. The Palestinians have accused Netanyahu of using such emotive issues to get out of his peace commitments. A Palestinian negotiator suggested earlier in the day that Arafat would not go through with the declaration if it would help Netanyahu get re-elected. (Continued on page 12)



## Rebels massacred 16 villagers — government

ALGIERS (R) — Islamist rebels cut the throats of 16 villagers, including eight children, in the worst massacre in Algeria since the start of the Muslim Holy Month of Ramadan, government security forces said on Monday.

Four villagers were also wounded in the Sunday night attack at Zmala hamlet in Ain Defla province, 130 kilometres southwest of Algiers, the security forces said in a statement.

They said the initial death toll rose to 16 after one of the people wounded in the attack died of his injuries.

"Security forces launched an intensive manhunt to track down the perpetrators of this criminal action," said the statement carried by the official APS news agency.

The statement gave no further details on the attack. The mountainous Ain Defla province has recently witnessed several clashes between government troops and Muslim rebels in which scores have been killed from both sides.

Liberte newspaper earlier reported that the massacre occurred at Ain Nsour village. It said the rebels, in an apparent attempt to divert the attention of security forces from the village raid, shelled the nearby town of Khemis Meliana in Ain Defla province, wounding more than 26 people.

Army helicopter gunships took off to attack rebel hideouts on Maamoura mountain overlooking Khemis Meliana from where the guerrillas shelled the town while their fellow fighters were attacking the village, Liberte said.

"At least 10 shells hit several districts of Khemis Meliana," Liberte said. It did not report any casualties among the rebels from the helicopter bombardment.

The massacre was the biggest number of killings in a single attack since the beginning of the Muslim fasting month 10 days ago. Bloodshed usually surges in Algeria in the run-up to and during Ramadan when Muslim rebels consider an auspicious period to step up their attacks.

More than 1,200 people, mostly villagers in remote areas, were killed in a series of massacres during last Ramadan. Khemis Meliana is a hotbed of violence in southwestern Algeria. At least 14 people were killed and 24 wounded in a bomb explosion near a market in the town three weeks ago. Liberte also reported that a bomb explosion killed two members of the government forces in Kadria region in Bouira province, 90 kilometres east of Algiers, on Sunday.



With his face bleeding after skirmishes with Israeli soldiers, Hussam Abu Yakoub holds his two children as he and his wife leave their home in the West Bank village of Kufr Haris following its demolition by Israeli soldiers Monday (AP photo) (see story page 1)

## Iraq keeps trade guessing over French tender

PARIS (R) — Grain traders on Monday remained in the dark about the outcome of Iraq's Dec. 24 tender for 50,000 tonnes of French wheat for February/March shipment.

Four days after submitting bids, exporters speculated whether heated tensions in the aftermath of U.S. and British air strikes could prompt Iraq to increase its order for French wheat as much as threefold or scrap the tender altogether.

"They could easily keep us guessing until the very last moment," said a trader in Paris.

Dropping the tender would be a chance to snub France for what Iraqi newspapers have called its ambiguous stance on the air raids.

Traders say increasing the tender, though, would strengthen any intended political signal to the United States and Australia in bypassing their wheat. Excluding Australia has been perceived by some traders as a possible snub to Australian Richard Butler, the chief U.N. arms inspector.

Escalating frictions, with Iraq vowing to fire at any United States or British aircraft over its territory, meant Iraq could well wait until the Dec. 31 deadline to announce the result, exporters said.

"They'll take another three or four days yet," said one. "We've heard nothing of the result yet," said an industry source in Geneva. "Hopefully we'll hear something tomorrow."

But heightened tensions, and Baghdad's terse reaction to France's careful stance on the U.S.-British raids, meant there was a risk the result could be put off, he added.

Paris has been careful not to openly criticise the bombings but blamed them on inadequate Iraqi cooperation with United Nations arms inspectors, sparking anger from Baghdad over what it called France's opportunism and causing exporters to fear their bids to supply French wheat could be cast aside.

But traders said on Monday that France, the only permanent U.N. Security Council member to neither join nor condemn the attacks, was still the best placed supplier.

## Cyprus missile issue to be decided Tuesday

NICOSIA (R) — Cyprus will decide on Tuesday whether to go ahead with a controversial deployment of Russian missiles which Turkey has threatened to destroy if they are brought to the divided Mediterranean island.

With the Russian manufacturers impatient to ship the S-300 missiles before a year-end deadline, President Glafcos Clerides left for Athens on Monday and will see Greek Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis on Tuesday morning.

It will be their second meeting on the much-debated missile deal in as many months. A meeting of Cypriot party leaders last week showed they were split down the middle on the merits of bringing the defensive anti-aircraft missiles to Cyprus.

Clerides has two options: He could send the \$500 million system to the Greek island of Crete for storage. That would place Turkey well out of the missiles' 150-kilometre range — a key objection voiced by Ankara when the order was placed in early 1997. But Clerides would suffer the humiliation at home of reneging on a pledge that many say got his government elected 10 months ago.

Or he could deploy the missiles in Cyprus and risk heightening tensions with Turkey and derailing the island's hopes of European Union membership. Clerides will return to Cyprus later on Tuesday and go to an emergency session of the National Council, an all-party consultative body on the Cyprus problem. Government officials said a final decision would be announced immediately afterwards.

The council convenes at 5 p.m. (1500 GMT). "I do not plan to make any statements before visiting Athens nor will I say anything after my visit and before the session of the National Council," Clerides told journalists before leaving on Monday afternoon.

"If it is a unanimous decision it will be respected," said Clerides, referring to the National Council. "If not, the responsibility of taking a final decision rests with the president."

One party leader told Reuters: "The National Council is split over the issue but I

freed this month by a Rome appeals court, itself lacking legal foundation. The petition, by lawyer Augusto Sinagra acting for the Turkish government, had sought the guerrilla leader's detention as a guarantee should a case for extradition arise. Sinagra had appealed the Rome court ruling to free him.

Ocalan, leader of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) fighting for an independent Kurdish state in southeast Turkey, is living in a villa near Rome under police surveillance. Turkey wants to try Ocalan for treason, but Italy

has refused to extradite him as the Italian constitution forbids extradition if a suspect could face the death penalty. Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema said last Wednesday that Ocalan was likely to leave Italy of his own free will, but "he himself must express this wish". Italian media have quoted an Ocalan spokesman as saying the rebel leader was set to go soon.

A spokeswoman for the PKK said last week Ocalan wanted to stay in Rome and await the results of an application for political asylum he lodged on arriving in Italy.

An interior ministry commission is due to rule on the request later this month. Turkey holds Ocalan responsible for the deaths of more than 29,000 people in the 14-year battle for self-rule. Italy's refusal to extradite the PKK leader set off a diplomatic row between Rome and Ankara which was rekindled when Rome's Court of Appeal set him free.

D'Alema said last week it was not feasible to expel Ocalan because he could appeal the decision and would probably win.

## Tehran mayor allowed to appeal sentence again

TEHRAN (AFP) — Tehran mayor Gholam-Husein Karbaschi, whose five-year jail sentence on embezzlement charges was reduced to two years last week, has been allowed to appeal again, the judiciary said Monday.

The attorney general's office, quoted by the official IRNA news agency, said the appeal decision was made after Karbaschi's lawyer, Bahman Keshavarz, protested.

In addition to reducing Karbaschi's prison sentence Thursday, the supreme court also cut his suspension from public service from 20 to 10 years and dropped his punishment of 60 lashes which a judge ordered in July.

But Karbaschi's lawyer protested that the reduced sentence was "unacceptable," insisting that the suspended mayor is innocent.

The decision to allow Karbaschi, a moderate reformer close to President Mohammad Khatami, to appeal again will, at least temporarily, keep him out of jail.

The mayor, 44, was also fined \$330,000 for "two cases of embezzlement and mishandling public funds," and ordered to return \$200,000 to the public coffers.

Karbaschi's arrest, followed by his July conviction, provoked political unrest, prompting Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, to order his release after 11 days.

Iranian moderates feared that the jail sentence passed by the high court would bring his political career to an end and hurt the reformist camp ahead of February municipal elections, when Karbaschi had been expected to stand again for mayor of Tehran.

## Jordan denies granting citizenship to Suharto's son-in-law

JAKARTA (AFP) — Jordan has denied granting citizenship to a son-in-law of former president Suharto who was dismissed from the armed forces after being implicated in the kidnapping and torture of political activists in the last months of Suharto's rule.

A statement by Jordanian ambassador Luay Khashman carried by newspapers here Monday said there was "no document in (Jordan's) ministries that showed that Prabowo was ever a recipient of Jordanian citizenship."

Prabowo, who has left the country, sent an open letter to newspapers from Aruan last week, denying that he had accepted an offer of honorary Jordanian citizenship from King Hussein.

"I am grateful but I can't accept it because Indonesia does not allow dual citizenship," Prabowo said.

The foreign ministry had said it was ordering a probe into the citizenship offer reports.

On Wednesday last week the military trial opened of 11 members of the Kopassus special forces including seven junior officers, charged with involvement in the kidnapping and torture case.

The prosecutor argued that the defendants had acted on their own initiative in the abductions, obeying "calls of conscience" to safeguard the national interest — an argument which raised howls of protest from human rights groups here.

## Turkish request that Italy detain Ocalan thrown out

ROME (R) — Rome's Appeal Court on Monday threw out a petition by lawyers acting for Turkey asking Italy to put Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan under preventive detention.

Court president Tommaso Figliuzzi declared the request inadmissible, saying it could only be granted at the behest of Italy's Justice Minister, Oliviero Diliberto, who has already recommended the guerrilla leader remain free.

The court also said the request to detain Ocalan, arrested in Rome on a German warrant on Nov. 12 but

freed this month by a Rome appeals court, itself lacking legal foundation. The petition, by lawyer Augusto Sinagra acting for the Turkish government, had sought the guerrilla leader's detention as a guarantee should a case for extradition arise. Sinagra had appealed the Rome court ruling to free him.

Ocalan, leader of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) fighting for an independent Kurdish state in southeast Turkey, is living in a villa near Rome under police surveillance. Turkey wants to try Ocalan for treason, but Italy

has refused to extradite him as the Italian constitution forbids extradition if a suspect could face the death penalty. Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema said last Wednesday that Ocalan was likely to leave Italy of his own free will, but "he himself must express this wish". Italian media have quoted an Ocalan spokesman as saying the rebel leader was set to go soon.

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An interior ministry commission is due to rule on the request later this month. Turkey holds Ocalan responsible for the deaths of more than 29,000 people in the 14-year battle for self-rule. Italy's refusal to extradite the PKK leader set off a diplomatic row between Rome and Ankara which was rekindled when Rome's Court of Appeal set him free.

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## Erez starts talks to form government

ANKARA (AP) — Starting with the head of an Islamic party, Turkey's latest premier-designate began talks Monday with party leaders to seek support for a new coalition government.

Yalim Erez, an independent lawmaker appointed last week, is trying to form a broad-based coalition that would include cabinet members from several parties to run the country until elections set for April.

"I am looking for a government that has the widest support possible. This does not depend on me alone," Erez said after a meeting with Islamic Virtue Party leader Recai Kutan. "I am looking for a grand compromise."

Kutan agreed that a consensus was needed within parliament but did not say if his party would support Erez.

"We will make our decision after a second-round meeting with Erez," Kutan told reporters.

Turkey has been trying to form a new government since a coalition government led by Mesur Yilmaz collapsed last month over allegations that the acting premier rigged the sale of a bank.

News reports have suggested that Virtue, the largest bloc in parliament, would only support Erez if the number of pro-Islamic ministers he appoints is proportionate to the number of seats the party holds in parliament.

Erez denied that the two had discussed ministerial posts.

### JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

### PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 Children's French programme  
15:30 ...Canton - Bananas in Pyjamas  
16:00 ...Doc - Life Choices  
16:30 ...Ch. 2 links with Ch. 1  
17:10 ...Les Yeux d'Helene  
18:15 ...Omar Ben Abdol Aziz  
19:00 ...Le Journal  
19:15 ...Words of Wisdom  
19:30 ...News headlines  
19:35 ...Comedy - Step by Step  
20:00 Journey Across the World of Islam  
20:30 ...Drama - Our Mutual Friend  
21:05 ...Doc - You and Your Car  
21:30 ...UN Cut  
22:00 ...News in English  
22:30 ...Lonesome Dove  
23:10 Feature film - "The Ruth Rendell"  
00:30 ...End of T.X.

### PRAYER TIMES

05:08 ...Fajr  
06:30 ...Sunrise  
11:38 ...Dhuhr  
14:22 ...Asr  
16:45 ...Maghreb  
18:07 ...Isha

### CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church  
Sweilieh, Tel. 5920740  
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785  
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590

### Terra Sancta Church Tel.

4622366

### Anglican Church Tel.

4624833/4624811

### St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel.

4771751

### Armenian International Church Tel.

5865897

### German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel.

5688404

### The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel.

5811295

### Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel.

4654932

### St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel.

5661757

### Church of the Annunciation Tel.

4637440

### Greek Orthodox Church Tel.

4646138

### Church of Presentation, Sweilieh Tel.

5920146

### The Uniate Catholic Church Tel.

4634757

### The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel.

4614190

### Evangelical Free Church Tel.

4892679

### The Baptist Church Tel.

4628052

### The Armenian Catholic Church Tel.

4771331

### The American Orthodox Church Tel.

4775261

### WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Depart-

## JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

### ment of Meteorology

Skies will be cloudy to partly cloudy with a chance of rainfall in the northern and central parts of the Kingdom and winds southeasterly to southwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be moderate, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

### Amman

05/11

Aqaba 11/21

Deserts 03/14

Jordan Valley 10/20

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 11, Aqaba 21 Humidity

readings: Amman 52 per cent,

Aqaba 43 per cent.

Following are the temperatures

expected today in the following

areas:

Ajloun 03/07

Jerash 07/14

Um Qays 06/13

Madaba 04/11

Petra 03/12

Dead Sea 10/21

### USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

### AMMAN:

Dr. Abbas Al Hakim 4885446

### Dr. Arafat Ashhab 5602907

Dr. Ayman Muhsen 4875748

Dr. Jamal Jbarah 5347351

### AMMAN:

Firas Pharmacy 5661912

Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730

Mayadah Pharmacy 537004

Rukn Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

### IRBID:

Dr. Issam Al Safi 03246858

Fou'ad Pharmacy 021275360

### ZARQA:

Dr. Yousef Abu Sa'd 091989000

Palestine Pharmacy 091983562

### EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111

Civil Defence Department 5661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777

Fire Brigade 4617101

Blood Bank 4775121

Highway Police 5343402

Traffic Police 4896390

Public Security Dept 4630321

Hotel Complaints 5605800

Price Complaints 5661176

Water & Sewerage Complaints 4897467

Amman Municipality Complaints 4787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 0132

### Central Amman Telephone Repairs

4623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101

Al Hikma Modern Hospital 4773111

Jordan Television 4774111

Radio Jordan 4774111

Water Authority 5680100

J. Electricity Authority 5815615

Electric Power Co. 4636381

RJ Flight Information 44-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

### HOSPITALS

#### AMMAN:

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199

The Islamic, Abdli 5666131/7

Husseini Medical Centre 5836856

Luznili 4630195

Khalidi Maternity 4642816

Akileh Maternity 4642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362

Malhas, J. Amman 4636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071

Shmeisani Hospital 5607431

Jordan Hospital 5607550

University Hospital 5353444

Al-Muasher Hospital 5667279

Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6

Al-Ahli, Muhajrez 4777101/3

Al-Bashir 4775111/26

Army, Marka 4891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 5157100



## News in Brief

to company's financial crisis after failing to adapt with the new market demands.

ket demands.

## EXHIBITIONS

Jan. 15 (Tel. 5699141/2).  
 \* "The Warm Winter" —  
 works by several artists at  
 Orfali Art Gallery, Um  
 Uthaina (Tel. 5526932),  
 until Feb. 1.  
 \* The Tenth Anniversary  
 Exhibition of Contem-  
 porary Arab Artists at Darat  
 Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh  
 (Tel. 4643251/2, until Jan.  
 28).

**AMMAN (Petra)** — Interior Minister Nayef Qadi Monday inspected the Civil Status and Passports Department and held talks with its Director General Awni Yrfas on several related issues.

**Jordan Times.**  
The deal is expected to be finalised within one week, added Akel.

The company's former **Chairman and General Manager Ali Sa'd**, who was arrested earlier this month along with 13 other employees in connection with an alleged JD15 million embezzlement, has been refused bail and remains in hospital after he was transferred from Jweideh prison.

It was not yet clear when the investigation would be finalised and when the case will be referred to court.

Sa'd's lawyer, **Salah Jeirudi**, said that no charges have been brought against his client, who is one of the biggest shareholders in the company.

The Ministry of Industry and Trade in September dissolved the company's board of directors

and appointed a new management comprised of representatives from the private and public sectors. The ministry appointed Akel from the Arab Bank as director general of the company, and the board members from the tobacco firm's main creditors as well as the government.

The trade ministry's decision came after the Arab Bank, the company's major creditor, filed a lawsuit against the financially-troubled firm after defaulting on a JD5.5 million payment.

According to the company's records, the 67-year-old firm owes local banks around JD22 million.

Sa'd is still recovering at the army-run heart centre of the Royal Medical Services, Jeirudi said.

Jweideh jail officials rushed Sa'd to the state-run Al Bashir Hospital

earlier last week after complaining of heart problems. Sa'd was later moved to the Royal Medical Services "for better observation," Jeirudi said.

One nurse supervising him said earlier last week that Sa'd was in stable condition and that he was expected to leave the hospital within three days after completing the required tests.

The tobacco company had enjoyed a monopoly for around 60 years under a concession agreement with the government. The government's decision in 1996 to award licence to two other tobacco companies to operate under foreign licence was the beginning of the oldest tobacco company's financial crisis after failing to adapt with the new market demands.



## China dissident in bold prison protest

BEIJING (R) — In a defiant statement scrawled from prison in his own shackled hand, a founder of China's banned opposition party Monday threw down a new challenge to the Communist Party.

Xu Wenti, jailed for 13 years last Monday on charges of subversion, said in the statement that the ruling party's iron grip on power was doomed.

He also dismissed his trial as political persecution and said he would not appeal.

Political pluralism was "historically inevitable", Xu said in the statement, written as he met his lawyer. "No individual or political power can prevent this."

The statement, for presentation to the appeals court, was carried out of Xu's Beijing detention centre by the lawyer and handed to his wife, He Xintong. A copy was made available to Reuters.

After his signature and the date, Xu wrote: "Pinned in handcuffs". His wife said he jotted down the message in front of his lawyer while guards stood nearby.

Xu, 55, was one of three founding members of the nascent Chinese Democratic Party handed heavy jail terms last week after summary trials. Qin Yongmin was jailed for 12 years and Wang Youcai for 11 years.

"My so-called open trial

was in truth nothing more than a means for political persecution. So I shall not give a fleeting thought to this 'judicial process', or answer any questions put to me by the prosecutor or courts," the statement said.

"Second, I shall not act in my own defence. Third, I will not appeal. This is a silent protest over my political persecution," it said.

Xu said the party had taken its place on the Chinese political stage in an "open and rational manner".

"Our original hope was to abandon mutual suspicion with the Communist Party, open up to each other and interact positively," the statement said.

"Who would have thought that a small number of Communist Party leaders, keeping at heart a personal interest in one-party rule, would have harmed members of the Chinese Democratic Party?" it said. "History will judge us fairly."

Xu's wife said her husband was being held in a cell with six other inmates at a Public Security Bureau detention centre.

He was not allowed books or newspapers, and was hoping for a transfer to a prison where reading was permitted.

Separately, the wife of a labour activist imprisoned for 10 years on Sunday for passing information to U.S.

government-backed Radio Free Asia, said her husband had been co-opted on trumped-up charges.

Zhang Shanguang was sentenced at a closed-door hearing for giving details of protests by farmers in central Hunan province to the radio station.

"The trial was not at all fair," said his wife, Hou Xuezhong.

During an interview with the station in March, Zhang gave details of a protest in Xupu county by some 80 farmers against excessive taxes and another demonstration in the province that resulted in deadly violence.

But Hou said information about the demonstrations was already public knowledge.

"Everyone knows about the event, so how can this be considered a national secret?" she asked.

China views Radio Free Asia as a U.S. propaganda tool and blocks its broadcasts.

Zhang, 45, was held on July 21 after trying to set up a pressure group to help laid-off workers, according to the New York-based group Human Rights in China. He had spent seven years in prison for his role in the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests.

Hou said she did not know whether her husband would appeal.



Lu Seng La, a 77-year-old Hmong hilltribe man, shows off, Dec. 17, his locks in Chiang Mai in northern Thailand. Ripley's Believe It or Not!, the American authority on human and other oddities, has just declared the Thai septuagenarian as possessor of the world's longest hair (Reuters photo)

## Riots hit Indonesian town, at least 22 injured

JAKARTA (AP) — Mohs armed with sickles and swords Monday battled each other and hurled gasoline bombs at houses and shops in an Indonesian provincial town. At least 22 people were injured and hundreds of residents fled their homes.

The riots in the town of Poso on Sulawesi island were triggered by weekend hawls between rival gangs of youths. The unrest escalated partly into attacks by townspeople on the homes of migrants from the main island of Java.

But the motive for much of the violence was unclear, with mobs attacking stores and houses at

random. Rioters set afire as many as 20 buildings and threw stones at the bus station, a local resident, Hajj Fatma, said by telephone.

"The centre of the town was blackened from the smoke billowing into the sky," Fatma said. She was preparing food for civilian guards who patrolled neighbourhoods, fearing more violence.

At least 100 families fled to a mountain outside Poso while others sought shelter with relatives. One witness said he saw eight truckloads of rioters drive into his neighbourhood.

Police and soldiers were also deployed to protect government buildings and

mosques and churches in Poso, 1,500 kilometres northeast of Jakarta. Shops were closed and buses stayed off the streets.

A nurse at the local hospital said by telephone that 22 people were injured, including one man whose neck had been cut by a sword. Other victims bled from head wounds after being hit by rocks.

Indonesia has endured sporadic riots this year amid economic hardship and rising ethnic and religious tensions. Deadly riots in Jakarta helped force former President Suharto to quit in May after 32 years of authoritarian rule.

## Russian armed forces cut down to 1.2 million

MOSCOW (AP) — President Boris Yeltsin said Monday that Russia's armed forces have been cut to 1.2 million troops, down from 1.5 million troops a year ago, and meeting the government's target for reducing the military.

Yeltsin spoke during a meeting with Defence Minister Igor Sergeev, who briefed the president on the progress of army reform.

"The target is met, the mission is accomplished," Yeltsin summed up, as reporters listened in.

The government has been gradually trimming the bloated and underfunded military, which had about 5 million men during the 1980s.

There are no plans to cut the military below 1.2 million — still a huge burden for the cash-strapped Russian government, struggling with the gravest economic crisis since the 1991 Soviet collapse. The Russian military barely functions, lacking funds to buy new weapons or maintain its ageing arsenal.

Critics advocate deeper cuts, citing abysmal conditions in the military. Military officials have acknowledged they

are short of funds to feed and dress troops. Begging soldiers are a common sight on the streets of Russian cities.

In 1996, Yeltsin pledged to turn the military into an all-volunteer force and end conscription by the year 2000, but the government later dropped the plan, saying it could not afford a professional army.

During the meeting, Yeltsin telephoned Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov to say the government must allocate 3.6 per cent of next year's budget to the military.

Russia's coffers are so bare that the entire 1999 budget calls for government spending of just 575 billion rubles (\$29 billion). By comparison, the United States government collects and spends more than \$30 billion in an average week.

Sergeev said, however, that the sum would be enough for the military and thanked Yeltsin for a promised rise in military salaries next year. In the past, the government has usually failed to meet spending promises.

During their meeting, Yeltsin also praised Sergeev for starting the

Topol-M ballistic missiles, designed as a backbone of Russia's strategic missile force.

Sunday, the minister inaugurated the first 10 Topol-M missiles at the Tatishchevo missile base, some 650 kilometres south of Moscow.

"We have achieved a very important goal. We have planned to deploy the new Topol-M missiles and we did it on time," Yeltsin said.

The deployment was a major step for Russia's beleaguered military. The government committed scarce resources to the Topol-M, due to replace ageing missiles to be cut under the START II arms reduction agreement with the United States.

Russia and the United States signed START II in 1993, and the U.S. Senate approved it in 1996, but the Communist-dominated Russian parliament has stalled ratification, claiming it would hurt Russia's security.

The lawmakers appeared heading toward its approval earlier this month, but then again delayed ratification until next spring to protest U.S. and British

## Indonesia may bar most parties from vote

JAKARTA (R) — Most of the new parties which have sprung up in Indonesia this year are unlikely to qualify for planned parliamentary elections in June, a government minister said Monday.

Home Affairs Minister Syarwan Hamid said that although around 120 parties had registered with his ministry, only some 15 would pass the required conditions to contest the elections scheduled for June 7.

"There will be conditions for the parties in joining the election. It is not easy," he told reporters.

He was speaking after a meeting with President B.J. Habibie. Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs Feisal Tanjung, armed forces chief General Wiranto and Justice Minister Muladi to discuss the vote.

According to Indonesia's proposed new political laws,

parties can take part only if they have chapters in at least nine of the country's 27 provinces and branches in at least half of its 243 regencies.

The election would be the first parliamentary poll since the resignation of former President Suharto on May 21 amid a crippling economic crisis, mass protests against his 32-year rule and an explosion of rioting in Jakarta.

Under Suharto only three parties were allowed — the ruling Golkar, the Muslim-oriented United Development Party (PPP) and the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI). Golkar dominated the political landscape and won the vast majority of votes.

Under Indonesia's proposed political timetable, the election of a new parliament would be followed in November by the nomination of a new president and vice president by members of parliament and other appointed

civilian and military officials. "We want fair, just and transparent elections. It is not only rhetoric," Hamid said, adding the government would accept foreign observers during the election.

Indonesia's armed forces (ABRI) have a number of seats reserved for them in parliament and play a significant political role, a focus of the anti-government protests which have shaken Indonesia in recent months.

Wiranto told reporters the military would remain neutral during the election period. "ABRI will maintain a neutral position and will not help any contestants during the election. ABRI will serve all participants the same," Wiranto said.

He said ABRI would not form a coalition with any political party. "ABRI will use its own jacket and there will be no coalition."

## Malaysia's Anwar tries to discredit sex evidence

KUALA LUMPUR (R) — Defence lawyers sought Monday to discredit evidence in the sex and corruption case against former Malaysian Finance Minister Anwar Ibrahim, implying semen could have been taken from his body while unconscious.

Anwar's lawyers began their new line of inquiry after police produced at his trial a mattress they said was stained by the ex-minister during sex trysts.

The mattress, which appeared in Malaysia's High Court two weeks ago, was removed from an apartment where Anwar had met a woman for sex, the prosecution has said.

Anwar's lawyers implied his semen might have been drawn without his knowledge and smeared on the mattress. Anwar is on trial on five charges of sodomy and five of corruption, but the court is initially considering four of the corruption counts. He has pleaded not guilty to all the

charges. Anwar's lawyers argued that prostate massage could produce semen from an unconscious man and tried to link the theory to his allegations that he was beaten senseless while in police custody.

But judge Augustine Paul said the alleged assault in custody was "totally irrelevant" to the charges faced by Anwar.

Gurbachan Singh, one of Anwar's nine lawyers, asked a government doctor who drew blood from Anwar on police instructions whether he could also draw semen from an unconscious man.

"It's very unlikely," replied forensic scientist Abdul Halim Manzar, under cross-examination. "It's not that easy even when the person is conscious."

Pressed by Gurbachan if this was possible, Halim said: "Yes, it can be done by the way of prostate massage through the rectum." But re-examined by prosecution chief Abdul Gani Puteh, the doctor said he could not cite a case where semen had been produced from an

unconscious man.

Halim said he inspected Anwar eight days after the former minister's arrest and took blood samples to check for the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and other infections.

The government has been under immense pressure to make public investigations into Anwar's alleged beating after his arrest on Sept. 20.

Sacked as both deputy prime minister and finance minister on Sept. 2, Anwar says the charges are part of a government conspiracy to destroy his political career.

When he first appeared in court in early October, Anwar sported a black eye and bruises on his neck and hands, saying they were caused by a beating in police custody.

Prime Minister Mahathir Muhammad, who sacked Anwar for his purportedly low morals, promised an investigation of the alleged assault of the man he once considered his anointed successor.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Cars torched as urban violence hits again Strasbourg

STRASBOURG, France (AFP) — Youngsters torched 10 cars and hurled a Molotov cocktail into a nursery school overnight Sunday to Monday, the latest incidents in a wave of urban unrest flaring in the French city of Strasbourg. Police said the school had been damaged and 18 youngsters detained in the second night of violence to hit the eastern city straddling the German border. A score of cars were torched the previous night as authorities launched a week of free concerts and entertainment aimed at preventing a recurrence of similar incidents during last year's Christmas and New Year holiday break. The week of free entertainment, put on by city authorities at the cost of 3.8 million francs (\$630,000), is seen as a test scheme to ward off urban violence and delinquency in deprived city suburbs across France where unemployment rides high. In Strasbourg last year, youths from poor suburbs, many of them inhabited largely by jobless immigrant families, torched cars and damaged public property throughout the New Year break. To avoid a replay of violence on New Year's Eve 1997, when some 60 cars were torched and bus shelters and phone cabins damaged, Strasbourg authorities are planning to deploy 600 officers in the city next Thursday. Fears of unrest come amid a wave of urban violence across France which is deeply worrying the Socialist government. Earlier this month, hundreds of riot police were deployed in southern Toulouse where three days of riots broke out following the police killing of a youth in an immigrant neighbourhood. And last October around 1,000 youngsters from deprived suburbs outside Paris went on a rampage in the capital burning cars and looting shops during school protests.

### Indian capital drafts paramilitaries to fight soaring crime

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Some 1,200 paramilitary troops have been deployed in the Indian capital in a desperate bid to check a growing crime wave, officials said Monday. The deployment was ordered late Sunday by Indian Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani following a series of murders which the police have failed to solve. It was not clear, however, if the paramilitary personnel would assist the local police crime investigations or take up fixed positions across the city of more than 10 million people. New Delhi has recently seen an unprecedented crime wave involving murders, rape and robberies, and the city's police chief V.N. Singh said last week that the "culture of violence was increasing" in the city. Singh said the city this year recorded 2,668 "heinous crimes," including 617 murders, 591 attempted murders, 767 robberies, 423 cases of rape, 188 riots and 23 kidnappings. Singh also blamed unchecked population growth in the Indian capital for the ballooning crime rates. Police hit the panic button after an elderly couple living on their own were murdered in a south Delhi residential district, barely two days after a similar double murder took place in the same area. Advani said Monday that the crime wave in New Delhi was no reflection of the law and order situation across the rest of the country. "Delhi is in the limelight. As the national capital, whenever such incidents take place, it gives a wrong impression," he said.

### Nuclear reactor restarted in Ukraine after unscheduled repairs

KIEV (AP) — A nuclear reactor was restarted at Ukraine's Yuzhnyaya power plant following brief unscheduled repairs, officials said Monday. Reactor No. 3 was restarted Sunday after plant operators fixed the facility's cooling system. The reactor was shut down Saturday because of hydrogen leaks, the state nuclear energy company Energoatom said. The shutdown led to an electricity shortage and forced officials to delay repairs at the Zaporizhia nuclear power plant, where one reactor was to have been stopped Saturday. Ukraine's five nuclear power plants provide more than 40 per cent of the former Soviet republic's energy needs. Three of the country's 14 reactors are currently undergoing repairs.

### Frenchman ordered to turn off 35,000 Christmas lights

METZ, France (AFP) — A Frenchman who decked his home in 35,000 fairy lights has been ordered by the city mayor to keep them switched off during the day to avoid distracting motorists. Gilbert Schult, mayor of the eastern town of Morbach, said Monday that in the interest of road safety he had ordered Armand Hag to turn off his Christmas lights until shops closed in evening. As Hag's brightly illuminated house is located near a shopping centre, the lights were causing streams of motorists to slow down or stop for a better view, the mayor said. "I was afraid people would be careless, specially as there's a pedestrian crossing nearby and drivers were slowing down without watching the road," Schult said.

### Tourist dies following Disneyland accident

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — A tourist who suffered a head injury while waiting to board a Disneyland ride died after two days on artificial life support, news media here reported. Luan Phi Dawson, 33, died late Saturday at the UC Irvine Medical Centre in the town of Orange, near the Disneyland amusement park. Unlike other people who have died at the park, Dawson had not been behaving irresponsibly, the Orange County Register newspaper reported. Dawson, his wife and a park employee were injured Thursday when a metal cleat snapped off the Columbia sailing ship — a park attraction — as the ship was being moored, according to the newspaper. The cleat struck Dawson and his wife on the head, and broke the employee's ankle. Dawson's wife, Lieu Thuy Vuong, 43, remained hospitalised with head injuries, the newspaper reported. The couple had been visiting from Washington state. Eight people have died at the Anaheim, California-based amusement park since Disneyland opened in 1955. Most had either behaved irresponsibly or were thrown from rides after taking off their seatbelts, according to the Register. Walt Disney Attractions issued a written statement deploring the tragedy, but refused to comment on allegations by former and current workers that inadequate training and ride maintenance due to cutbacks may have contributed to the accident, the Los Angeles Times reported. Each year close to one million people visit Disneyland, the Times reported.

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Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga (left) is greeted by Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee as Indian first lady Usha Narayanan looks on during the welcome ceremony in New Delhi. Kumaratunga is expected to sign a free trade agreement with India during her two-day visit (Reuters photo)

## Sri Lankan president meets with Indian PM

NEW DELHI (AP) — Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga met the Indian prime minister Monday as aides put finishing touches on an accord to establish a free trade area between the two countries.

Her country has "no reservations" on signing the free-trade area accord, Kumaratunga told reporters after she was accorded a ceremonial welcome at the presidential palace in New Delhi.

She met with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Details of the talks were not immediately known.

The two sides were to sign later Monday the free trade area agreement and a memorandum of understanding to set up an India-Sri Lanka foundation which would promote exchanges in the arts, culture, trade, commerce and science and technology, said Dinesh Patnaik, a foreign ministry official.

Last July, India announced steps to liberalise trade with six of its neighbours, saying the move will increase their access to the vast Indian market.

India's initiative came as the regional grouping of India, Sri Lanka and five other countries seemed to be falling behind the target of setting up a free trade zone in South Asia by 2001 on the pattern of Europe.

## Khmer Rouge defectors, shielded by premier, will escape trial

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — Prime Minister Hun Sen defied growing pressure Monday to bring two Khmer Rouge leaders to trial for genocide and said they would face neither an international tribunal nor a Cambodian court.

"If we bring them to trial, it will not benefit the nation, it will only mean a return to civil war," Hun Sen said before a Cabinet meeting. "We should dig a hole and bury the past and look towards the future."

The Khmer Rouge leaders, Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea, remained holed up in the rebel stronghold of Pailin in the northwest, where they were staying in guest houses under the protection of old comrades who defected to the government two years ago.

"The pair agreed to defect — in effect, surrender — in a phone call with Hun Sen on Christmas, 20 years to the day after Vietnamese troops invaded Cambodia to topple the blood-stained Khmer Rouge regime," the government slammed the

door on intense international demands that Khieu Samphan, the official leader though others held real power, and political chief Nuon Chea stand trial.

"Should we kill Khieu Samphan or welcome him for national reconciliation?" Hun Sen asked. "This deal is a bouquet of flowers for this pair, not a bullet or a pair of handcuffs."

Over the past two years, the government broke the back of the Khmer Rouge by offering amnesty to leaders in exchange for ending civil war, bringing peace to large areas of Cambodia for the first time in a generation.

With the movement now all but extinct — only one leader, the one-legged general, Ta Mok, and perhaps 100 followers are still at large — demands are growing for someone to be held accountable for the reign of terror that left as many as 2 million people dead.

Hun Sen said Monday that he would never make a deal with Ta Mok, known as "The Butcher" for his revolutionary brutality. He once said the same thing of

## Thousands of British homes deprived of electricity by storms

LONDON (AP) — Tens of thousands of homes were still without electricity in Britain and Ireland Monday as a result of damage caused by heavy storms and hurricane-force winds which left five people dead over the weekend.

Weather forecasters warned of the possibility of new storms Monday night in Ireland and western England, which could also bring snow and freezing conditions.

Monday morning, around 105,000 homes were still without electricity in Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Most were expected to have current restored by Monday night.

A spokesman for Ireland's Electricity Supply Board said: "The scale of the devastation has become apparent as our repair teams have moved into the worst-hit areas."

"This is regarded as the worst type of hurricane to have moved across Ireland since 1961."

In Scotland, engineers reached snowbound areas by helicopter.

Three people died in accidents caused by fallen trees on roads, including a five-year-old boy who was a passenger in a car which hit branches strewn across the road in north Wales.

## Dozens killed in cold snap over Eastern Europe

MOSCOW (AP) — Dozens of people have been killed in a cold snap sweeping across Russia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania over the Christmas holidays, authorities in Eastern Europe reported Monday.

In Moscow, nine people died last week, bringing the total number of deaths from the cold to 69 this winter, according to city emergency services quoted by Interfax news agency.

A total of 178 Muscovites have been hospitalised for hypothermia this winter and 30 others for chilblains.

In Hungary, the Christmas cold killed 11 people, bringing the death toll to 70 since mid-November, police said.

Most of the victims there were homeless people, men aged 40-50 who fell asleep outdoors in temperatures of minus 10 degrees Celsius after drinking too much alcohol, police said.

Meanwhile, the death toll from the cold weather hitting Poland since mid-November rose to 162 when the body of an 86-year-old woman was found Sunday in a field in Sarzyn, a village in southeastern Poland. She died of hypothermia, probably after fainting, police said.

Temperatures in Poland, which had fallen to minus 10 degrees Celsius, warmed somewhat Sunday.

## OSCE head says future of Kosovo observers in doubt

VIENNA (AP) — The future of the international observer mission in Kosovo might have to be rethought after new fighting in the province, the chairman of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Bronislaw Geremek, said Monday.

In an official OSCE statement, Geremek, the Polish foreign minister, expressed his "deep concern with the renewed fighting and the breach of the fragile ceasefire in Kosovo in recent days", blaming both sides for the breaches.

"Contrary to the October Agreement and commitments, Serbian forces have reentered Kosovo and undertaken repressive actions. At the same time, terrorist acts have again been committed by Kosovo Albanian military factions," the statement said.

"This spiral of violence puts in danger the perspective of a peaceful solution to the conflict in Kosovo. If the bloodshed and violence escalate, the OSCE would have to reconsider the forms of its activities in Kosovo in the context of a

broader involvement of the international community in the search for a peaceful solution to this conflict," the statement said.

The unarmed OSCE observers were put in place to enforce a peace deal for the province which was agreed in October by U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke and Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic.

The deal allows for some 2000 observers in all to verify the hard-negotiated deal for the troubled province, but an OSCE spokesman in Vienna said Monday that only 700 are in place.

They are mainly distributed between the capital of the province, Pristina, and the villages of Trizina in the south, Pec in the west and Mikoviza in the north west.

Fifteen ethnic Albanian fighters from the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) have been killed since Thursday after the authorities in Belgrade launched a major crackdown in the north of the province to avenge a series of anti-Serbian attacks.

The military operation against the KLA was the

largest since Serbian troops withdrew to their bases as part of the Holbrooke peace deal.

Geremek noted in the statement issued in Vienna that the OSCE "embarked upon a verification mission in Kosovo as part of a broader peace solution on the understanding that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Serbian authorities would not resort to repression and that the Albanian community in Kosovo would refrain from acts of violence."

Geremek said the safety of the observers must be safeguarded.

In Warsaw, a spokesman for the Polish foreign minister said that the warning signs were "very clear. The (OSCE) mission risks losing its purpose," Pawel Dobrolowski said.

NATO has organised a special "extraction force" based in neighbouring Macedonia in the event that violent danger to the unarmed observers requires their emergency evacuation. The KLA is fighting for the independence of Kosovo from the rump state

of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). Nine-tenths of the population in the southern Serbian province are ethnic Albanians.

Responsibility for the difficult future of the OSCE mission will fall to Norway, when it takes over the rotating chairmanship of the OSCE on Jan. 1.

Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollehaug, who is due to visit Kosovo from Jan. 9-13, told Norway's NTB news agency that "both the OSCE as an organisation and me personally will be judged by what we accomplish in Kosovo. It could well be a success, but also a disaster."

The observer force is mainly drawn from Germany, Britain, Italy and France.

The 55-member OSCE is a pan-European forum sharing concerns with the Strasbourg-based Council of Europe, NATO and the European Union in sensitive peace-threatened areas. In practice it concerns itself largely with the former Communist bloc.

## 'Croatia may end cooperation with Hague Tribunal'

ZAGREB (R) — Croatia may slam its door in the face of an international war crimes tribunal if it indicts army generals who fought in the 1991-95 war against rebel minority Serbs, a senior official was quoted Monday as saying.

President Franjo Tudjman said earlier this month in a heated address to a military school that the Hague-based International Criminal Tribunal had five or six Croatian generals on its wanted list.

The tribunal denied that indictments were being prepared.

Tudjman's senior adviser, Ivo Pasalic, told the daily newspaper Jutarnji List in an interview Monday that Zagreb was beginning to

suspect hidden motives behind some of the tribunal's acts.

"Thirteen Croats have been indicted and no one for the crimes committed against Croats. Therefore, we have enough elements to conclude there is no wish to punish the crimes committed in Croatia," Pasalic said.

Instead, he said, indictments were being prepared for the generals who took part in "brilliant victories in the operations 'Lightning' and 'Storm' — code names for two swift offensives in which Zagreb recaptured most Serb-held land in 1995.

"Should Croatian generals be called to the Hague, our patience will definitely come to an end. That will

put in question Croatia's cooperation with the tribunal, including a possible revoking of the law on cooperation with the tribunal."

Croatia had to pass a special law in 1996 allowing extradition of its citizens for trial abroad.

It has since expedited a dozen war crimes suspects to the Hague, including a high-ranking Bosnian Croat general whose trial has dragged on for two years and is still far from completion.

Belgrade, the patron of Bosnian Serbs who dominate the indictment list, has bluntly refused to cooperate with the tribunal, citing its laws which prevent extradition.

In an act of open defiance, it last week held a court hearing as part of an internal investigation into atrocities committed near the Croatian city of Vukovar in 1991.

Three Yugoslav army officers, accused by the Hague of taking part in the murder of 260 unarmed men near the town, appeared only as witnesses, prompting the U.N. Security Council to start weighing extra sanctions against Belgrade for non-compliance.

Pasalic said the Croatian government was not considering revoking the law on cooperation with the tribunal at the moment, "but it's a realistic option, should the indictments be prepared," he added.

## Over 25 slain in S. African province over Christmas

JOHANNESBURG (R) — More than 25 people were murdered over the Christmas weekend in South Africa's volatile KwaZulu-Natal province, but police said Monday that the death toll was so far not a motive in any of the killings.

Police spokesman Bala Naidoo said that although the death toll was high, the festive season had not been more bloody than usual in the region which has been a hotbed of political violence since the mid-1980s.

"Between Christmas and New Year people tend to use excessive alcohol and get into arguments. This often ends up in shootings and stabbings... Normally we also get incidents of faction fighting," Naidoo told Reuters.

"At this stage we have not established that the motives in any of the attacks were political." In the most vicious attack, seven men and one woman were shot dead by a group of armed men at family festivities on Christmas Eve in the coastal town of Margate.

Four arrests were made. President Nelson Mandela said he was "shocked and outraged" by the Margate killing especially as the shooting occurred when the country was preparing for "the most peaceful festive season so far in KwaZulu-Natal".

Three people were killed in a shooting on Christmas Day in Umlazi township outside the port city of Durban. Saturday four family members, including an eight-year-old, were shot dead by two gunmen armed with heavy-calibre rifles in a suspected revenge attack after an altercation earlier in the day.

KwaZulu-Natal has been the scene of several clashes between supporters of the ANC and the predominantly Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party in which thousands of people have died.

On Christmas Day in 1995, 14 people were killed in a mass raid by Inkatha warriors on ANC members.

Naidoo said 70-80 additional police were sent last week to the south coastal region after six men were shot and hacked to death by a gang of men in a suspected factional fight in the town of Harding, 70 km northwest of Margate.

## Swiss hope for Chinese clearance for balloon attempt

BERN, Switzerland (AP) — Switzerland is optimistic that China will soon grant a Swiss-based balloon team permission to fly over the country in its quest for the first nonstop round-the-world flight, a foreign ministry spokeswoman said Monday.

The Breitling Orbiter 3 team said last week it postponed its attempt due to Chinese irritation over the failure of its rivals, Chicago millionaire Steve Fossett, British tycoon Richard Branson and Per Lindstrand to respect previously agreed conditions.

The Swiss foreign ministry is in constant contact with China and is doing all it can to obtain clearance for pilot Bertrand Piccard and his new partner, Brian Jones of Britain, said ministry spokeswoman Monika Schmutz.

Piccard and Jones, who obtained conditional permission, had said they might take off as soon as Sunday. It would be Piccard's

third attempt to become the first person to pilot a balloon around the world non-stop.

Beijing — originally gave Branson, Fossett and Lindstrand, of Sweden, permission to cross China below 26 degrees north latitude. The trio, however, drifted further north last Monday.

After diplomatic communications between Britain and China, the balloonists were allowed to continue flying as long as they left China as quickly as possible.

Caught in poor weather conditions, the team splashed down off Hawaii Friday.

Piccard's last round-the-world bid was abandoned after China refused his balloon entry, causing it to miss out on jet-stream winds needed to speed it over the Pacific.

Another attempt at the balloon record was stalled Monday by strong winds over the Re/Max team's launch pad in Alice Springs, Australia.



## Jordan Times

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## Overdue review

A CAREFUL look at Jordan's participation in the recent 13th Asian Games in Bangkok paints a grim picture of the state of sports in the Kingdom.

Apart from the taekwondo team, which won four of the five medals collected by all Jordanian athletes, most failed to even match their own records set here in the country.

The event, described by officials as an "invaluable chance to assess our teams and pinpoint our location on the map of Asian sports," has proved that we still have a long way to go especially that we are preparing for two major events on the sports calendar — the 9th Pan-Arab Games next summer and the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

One thing is very clear: We have failed in our attempt to upgrade the level of our athletes and cannot help but feel disappointed at the overall results. Jordan took part in 11 sports events, and although the best athletes were enlisted through a screening process, most competitors produced below average results. Jordan again failed to win a gold medal at the Asian Games and the delegation returned with three silver and two bronze medals. In the past two Asian Games in Seoul '86 and Hiroshima '94, Jordan's sole medals were also won in taekwondo with a total of three silver and five bronze medals.

Following the delegation's return, a senior sports official warned that a wide gap existed between sports federations and athletes. Many experts also conceded that the dismal showing at the Bangkok Games needed immediate action, including an overhaul of the sports administration to rectify the situation as Jordan prepares to host the Pan-Arab Games in 1999.

However, recent reports from the Ministry of Culture and Youth suggested that only minor changes will take place and in only four out of over 20 sports federations. Furthermore, the changes are not expected to touch upon those federations whose athletes have produced below par results.

As painful as it may be to some of our athletes, their trainers or officials, now is the best time for a serious assessment of the situation.

It has been said time and again that our national teams should not only prepare for a certain event but rather have a long-term training strategy. Assessment should also follow training before taking part in any future events.

Most sports officials concur that it would have been wiser not to have sent such a big delegation, but rather only enlist those with recent solid results.

Apart from training, our sports officials need to look at other areas. Jordan produced the first doping case of the Games in which over 6,000 athletes from 41 nations took part. The athlete, a medal favourite at the Pan-Arab Games, is expected to be suspended by the International Weightlifting Federation for two years and will thus miss the Amman Games. The Olympic Council of Asia also reprimanded the Jordan Olympic Committee after the country's top weightlifter admitted to have taken the drug over a long period upon instruction of his coach.

Furthermore, only three other athletes from Kuwait and the UAE failed drug tests. Overall Arab results at the Bangkok Games were also very discouraging with six Arab countries managing to win only 36 medals.

Maybe we are not the only Arab country that needs a heavy assessment and adjustment process, but we should be the first to do it with the Amman Games just eight months away.

## ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Rai's Sultan Hanab reiterated the role Arab parliaments may play in energising the Arab political order, saying that these parliaments should not stand tight-lipped vis-a-vis various critical Arab causes. Hattab added that there is a feeling among Arab citizens that there are (Western) double standards in dealing with Arab causes. How does the world community deal with the Iraqi and Lebanese causes, how does it view the massacre of innocent civilians in the Arab World, how does the international community view the denial of Palestinian people's rights, how does it regard the non-abdication by some parties with peace agreements? asked Hattab, calling on Arab parliaments and Arab people to protect Iraq, safeguarding its unity and lifting the siege imposed on it since 1990.

Al Dustour's Rakan Mujali said that pan-Arab interests should be given priority in this critical juncture that the Arab Nation is passing through. Mujali also called on boosting inter-Arab solidarity to combat policies of singling out individual Arab countries because, as this will pose a danger that will adversely affect other Arab countries.

## Tyranny, dependency, power and the rule of law

THE ONE-DAY emergency meeting of the Arab Parliamentary Union in Amman Sunday to discuss the Anglo-American attacks against Iraq was disappointing, but it clarified two important contemporary Arab issues that have to be sorted out.

First is the issue of the credibility and role of the many Arab parliaments or consultative councils; second is the inaction of Arab states when their stark operational choice is between solidarity with fellow Arabs and friendship with the sole global power, the U.S.

The parliamentarians who gathered in Amman represent Arab parliaments that have a very mixed track record in terms of credibility, legitimacy, and effectiveness. Some are impressive institutions that try to deal seriously with the issues of laws, governance, and the accountability of executive power; some others are none of the above. Starkly, not a single one of the ten or so Arab parliaments elected since the mid-1980s has caused any Arab government to significantly change its policies.

So what did the Arab parliamentarians do? The elected or appointed representatives of the Arab people who met here Sunday agreed on a series of

meaningful wishes, and meaningless symbols. They huffed and they puffed, and they accurately expressed the sentiments of the Arab people — but not much more than that. They agreed to condemn the Anglo-American aggression against Iraq, support Iraqi claims for compensation for damages, call on Arab states to lift the economic embargo against Iraq, send an Arab parliamentary delegation there, and call for an urgent Arab summit to address the issue of its suffering.

Frankly, I am not impressed by yet another round of get-tough rhetoric supported only by feel-good symbolism, and I suspect that the majority of Arabs also are not impressed.

This raises the deeper question of the precise role of Arab parliaments. Why do we have parliaments? Where are their cultural or political roots in Arab traditions and governance structures? How do our parliaments relate, say, to executive branches of government where, say, the ruling regimes had assumed power, say, by military coup and have remained in power for oh, three or more decades?

These slightly awkward questions must be raised, debated, and answered, if we are ever to escape the frustrating cycle that

has dominated Arab political life for much of this century. That frustration is manifested very clearly and painfully in the Iraqi question, where widespread Arab opposition to Anglo-American mad-dog militarism and economic sanctions contrasts with equally widespread Arab desires to be friendly with the U.S.

The Arab parliamentarians express their people's intense emotional and political anger with the U.S. and U.K., and make rhetorical and symbolic gestures of solidarity with Iraq; but at the same time these parliaments are unable or unwilling to take any concrete moves on the two key dynamics that matter here: they cannot change Anglo-American or Arab policies towards Iraq. This is probably because many Arab states depend heavily on the U.S. (and Europe) for financial support, technical assistance, food, markets, armaments, diplomatic support, or sheer survival through direct military protection.

In these conditions, Arab governments that rely on U.S. support for their existential survival will not suicidally defy American policy, in the same way that Arab parliaments will not defy Arab governments and ruling power elites.

## View from the Fourth Circle



Rami G. Khouri

The result we live with is a chronically frustrating display of distorted and erratic governance, in both the U.S./U.K. and the Arab World.

It is striking that not a single Arab government or parliament has come up with a practical means of bridging this gap. None has offered practical suggestions on how to reconcile the two clashing dimensions of our political and personal lives — our instinctive commitment to the pan-Arab dimension of our identity, and our deliberate policy of friendship and coop-

eration with the U.S. and the West in general. The criticism of Anglo-American policy on Iraq should not, however, blind us to the impressive conduct of the U.S. and British parliaments in their own domestic governance systems — as we witness the U.S. and British officials being subjected to public political accountability before parliament.

The problem is not Iraq, or American/British policy, or Arab parliaments, or Arab governments. The problem — and has been for most of the century — is the distortions and contradictions that result from the exercise of political power that is not subjected to checks and balances. So we suffer abuse of power within many Arab states, and abuse of military power by the United States globally.

The result of the application of unchecked power is tyranny by the powerful, and dependency by the weak. The antidote in both cases is a return to the rule of law.

## Presidential devils and political entrails

By Sean J. Osner

LAST WEEK'S political circus which culminated in the impeachment of the American president, the resignation of the Speaker-elect of the House of Representatives, and the frivolous bombing of Iraq, leaves the U.S., undoubtedly, in a time of uncertainty and national self-reflection. Indeed, so grave are the course of events which transpired last week that the U.S. has become morally confounded, sceptically struck in awe by its own political processes, and deeply critical of bipartisan pettiness, and self-righteous charges of immorality.

The citizens of America stand dizzy and dumbstruck by the spin-meisters who would either lead you to believe that the office of the president is defiled as long as William Jefferson

Clinton remains, or that the fabric of the greatest democracy on earth is being slowly torn apart by a juvenile struggle for power. Moreover, the cantankerous ramblings in Washington in the past two weeks, have led Americans to toil over the political motives of those who wish to dismiss a president, and the policies of a president who wishes to disarm a despot.

Yet in all the search for truth, and in all the quest for the rule of law and order, it is the latter — policies, and not the president — which defines the character of America. And despite all the political chaos of the day, the U.S. must be reminded that it is through the policies of a nation that the attitudes of a people are reflected, and not through the leader of a nation, lest we forget why and how they have become the greatest and most respected

nation in the world.

It is this last fact that is so precious, so important, and vital for the U.S. as a nation to understand as it digests the historical proceeding of the last week.

But before the people of America lament the fall from grace of their president, or shame the soiling of their most sacred institutions, they must stop and consider the defamation they bestow upon their own national self-character with their continuous misguided policies in the Middle East. "Operation Desert Fox," carried out by the U.S. and U.K. to force Saddam Hussein to comply with U.N. weapons inspections, only reinforces the failures of America's policy in the Middle East, and further tarnishes its image in a region which it is so desperately trying to embrace.

Has anyone considered that the

propensity to burn the American flag in the Middle East increases proportionately as the number of late night cruise missile attacks? Is it not ironic that daily there is endless hoopla over peace in the region, yet, daily the casualty rate keeps climbing and the arms stockpiles keep swelling?

Is it not even more ironic that Americans charge their own congressman with the duty of condemning the infidelities of the president, while the president charges the lives of young Americans with the duty of convicting the Iraqi people to endless sanctions, even death and destruction — as if they themselves were infidels. Have the sexual conquests of one man taken precedent over peace and prosperity? Has the greatest democracy on the face of the earth lost its collective soul?

Perhaps the U.S. is fortunate

as a nation to be able to dispose of a leader when his credibility to rule is in question, but America as a nation raises serious doubts about its own credibility as a broker of peace when it stands idle, dumbstruck, and confounded by its own destructive policies in the Middle East.

In the long run the high office of the U.S. will regain its sanctity, but it will be American foreign policy — the instrument of U.S. relations with other nations — which will ultimately define or redefine the character of the U.S. in the Middle East.

The writer is a graduate student at the American University in Cairo. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

## LETTERS

### Grievances of domestic workers must be addressed!

To the editor:

I AM a Filipino who has been working in Abdoun as a domestic worker for more than five years. As far as I know, the salary for a Filipino domestic worker has increased. Most of the helpers I know who work outside of Abdoun receive a salary of over \$200 a month, with at least one full day off, and have the right to go to church, while those in Abdoun receive only \$100 to \$175. For us Filipinos who work daily until midnight, with a low salary, it is time for us to speak out.

I know we are here to serve our employers, but we need at least one day-off to go to church and thank God for His blessings. But since many of us are not allowed to get the day off and go to church, many run away.

I hope the Jordanian government can help us. I am also calling on the people of the Philippines and our embassy, to help us with our salaries and our day-off.

Terry Mercado  
 Amman

To the editor:

I JUST want to tell our employers that we, domestic helpers, leave our country to earn money abroad to support our family and have a better living. But most of us are poorly treated and, as a result, many domestic workers want to run away from their employers. I am a concerned friend of Myrna S., who was sent back to the Philippines by her employer, who did not pay her four months worth of salary and did not allow her to take her personal belongings with her. She was sent home with only JD15. I feel sorry for her because she has three children to support, and had been working at her employer's house for at least five years. She is asking for some sympathy from her employer should she read this letter (you know who you are). Please send her salary payment and belongings to the Philippines. She is not the only one who needs it. Her children need it most of all. Here is the address:

Myrna Sugadura  
 c/o Juanito Lumontad  
 Sapang Palay  
 Sampul Market  
 Bulacan, Philippines

B. Gaspar  
 Amman

To the editor:

HAVING LIVED in Jordan for quite a number of years, I am still puzzled by something that always prompts me to ask "are we really taking our religions seriously, that is, knowingly committing to heart and mind our personal relationship with the God whom we proclaim and believe as a God of mercy and justice: a God of compassion and love?" It is in this context that I would like to comment on an issue that has been taken up several times by your publication: that of the maltreatment of foreign workers by their employers.

If I truly believe in a God who is merciful, just, compassionate and above all, loving,

could I not somehow be touched by that belief and create some effect on the way I look at life, for example, in the way I relate with other people outside my family members or clan?

The accounts of several cases of maltreatment by employers of their foreign workers that I've read and heard about have brought tears to my eyes. Christians have begun the prayer season of Advent in preparation for Christmas, while Muslims are fasting in the Holy month of Ramadan. It is fitting at this point therefore to invite the reader to think over her/his unique personal relationship with God. Is my God merciful, compassionate and loving with me? If so, then why am I not likewise with others?

Caroline Granil  
 Marka

To the editor:

PLEASE ALLOW us to submit our comments on your article "Government intends to raise fine to JD3 for maids who do not renew work permits" (Dec. 23, 1998). To our knowledge, "work permits" are governed by Article (12) of the 1996 Labour Law, which provides that non-Jordanians must obtain one-year, renewable work permits prior to employment. The law provides that the ministry of labour shall charge the employer a fee for the issuance or renewal of the work permit for domestic helpers, gardeners, cooks and the like, which will be determined by restrictions.

The law also provides that employers shall be penalised, by a minimum of JD50 for every month, if a non-Jordanian employee is found in violation of the law. We submit that the employee, the employer and the government (Ministry of Labour), are interrelated when it comes to this issue.

We believe that the 1996 Labour Law is a very modern and enlightened piece of legislation. As such, it is more of a catalogue of employee rights and employer obligations, the purpose being to promote the rights and interests of the vast majority of society, the labouring masses.

Another point noticed in the article is the comment by one labour official that "out of one million guest workers, only 117,000 have rectified their situation."

If we are to calculate that there are some 880,000 "illegal" guest workers in Jordan then the JD300 work permit fee per employee translates to an unrealised income to the treasury of JD264 million for one year.

If we calculate the amount of overdue income from the JD50 monthly penalty, there is a further unrealised income to the treasury of JD528 million for one year.

This means a total of JD792 million savings on the part of the employers, but a loss to the treasury.

The so-called "amnesty" for overdue labourers will benefit employers, but prejudice the government and bring untold inconvenience to foreign workers.

Our interpretation of the 1996 Labour Law, and its rationale or spirit behind it, may be wrong. But it is hoped that this comment can serve to generate public awareness of the matter and discussion thereon in the interest of all concerned.

Jaime E. Calano  
 Embassy of the Philippines  
 Amman



## Excavations identify more ancient town remains at Aqaba, including earliest Nabataean-Roman settlement

(Editor's note: This is the second of two articles on the latest excavations at Aqaba; the first article appeared in yesterday's Jordan Times.)

THE TOWN of Aila was fortified, or probably re-fortified, in the 4th or 5th century AD by a substantial city wall with projecting rectangular towers. These fortifications might be associated with the 10th Frentensis Legion of Roman troops that moved to Aila in 300 AD and remained there until at least the early 5th century AD. With 1000 troops and their families, they would have represented a substantial injection into the local economy.

The Roman-Byzantine fortification wall, which averaged 1.1-to-1.4 metres thickness and was preserved to a height of four metres in some places, has been uncovered along a total length of over 120 metres. The lack of internal structures in the lower portion of the towers suggests the towers were intended only as elevated fighting platforms.

The fortifications seem to have fallen into disrepair by the Late Byzantine period (6th/early 7th centuries AD), when mudbrick and stone structures were built over the wall in places. In the 7th century AD the wall was extensively robbed of its stones, which were used as building material for the new Early Islamic-urban quarter immediately to the south-east of Roman-Byzantine Aila. The earlier site continued to be inhabited, though, as indicated by several excavated domestic areas dating from the Late Byzantine, Umayyad, and early Abbasid periods.

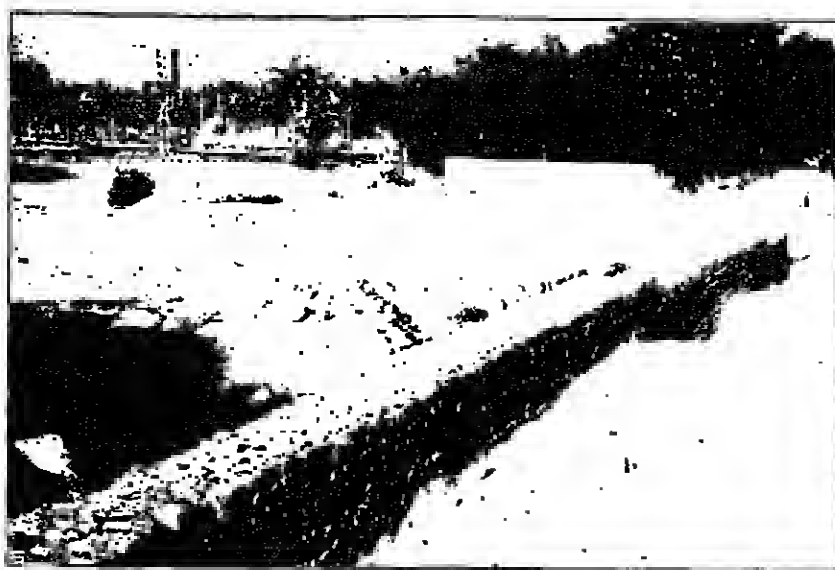
Late Byzantine and early Islamic (Umayyad and Abbasid) remains excavated just north of the shoreline, around the corniche street, include mudbrick domestic complexes of several rooms built around a paved courtyard, located on both sides of a street (beneath the street) was a stone-lined well fed by a ceramic drainpipe from the street). Associated artifactual remains include com-

mon ware pottery, glass, animal bones, domestic tabateen, and some industrial installations (clay mixing pits).

The evidence suggests to dig director Dr S. Thomas Parker of North Carolina State University (U.S.) that there may have been domestic and/or industrial "suburbs" outside the early Islamic city walls, some of which stood on the site of the former Roman/Byzantine town and continued to use the street plan of the earlier town. One such area was abandoned after the 8th Century and was used as a municipal dump by the new Islamic town. Four metres of Umayyad and Abbasid remains in this area indicate that the Byzantine town continued to be extensively occupied well into the Islamic era. No evidence of Fatimid period habitation has been found in the excavation areas outside the Islamic era walls but were found inside Islamic era Aila next door, probably reflecting the slow decline and shrinking of the town in the Fatimid period.



A mudbrick wall from a house dating from the 1st Century AD Nabataean/Roman era settlement at Aqaba (Photos by Rami G. Khouri)



A long stretch of the Byzantine town wall that was uncovered this year.

An important find this year was a fragmentary Greek inscription (from the Byzantine period) that was on a stone used to line a drain inside an Umayyad period building. The name "Aila" is clearly visible in the text, the first time the name of the ancient town has been found there.

From the information obtained so far from the excavations, the Nabataean-Roman-Byzantine city's economy is known to have comprised a combination of metalworking and ceramics industries, extensive trade with East Mediterranean partners, and some local agriculture and fishing. The economy also benefited from holy pilgrim traffic, Roman-Byzantine military payrolls, and perhaps inflows of livestock from surrounding pastoral areas, he added.

Regional trade is attested by many red wares (plates and dishes) originating from Turkey, Egypt, Cyprus and Tunisia, as well as amphorae (shipping jars). Commodities from east and west that passed through the port-town included wine, oil, garum (fish sauce), grain, glass, marble, metal, spices, stone vessels, and luxury goods.

The overall results of the project to date suggest that a flourishing

Nabataean town existed at Aqaba by the 1st Century B.C., with prosperity defining the expansion of the settlement in Late Roman years (2nd to early 4th Century). The Byzantine town continued to enjoy prosperity, but shifted its location towards the south-east while maintaining widespread international commercial contacts. The late 4th and 5th centuries seem to be a period of some turbulence in the city's history, to judge by the rather hurried and haphazard building of the town wall and the abandonment of what seems to have been a major church. Perhaps regional threats (Sassanids?) or internal Byzantine revolts explain this.

The later Byzantine history of Aila in the late 5th to early 7th Century is not clear, for most remains from this period are buried beneath the structures of the early Islamic town but the economy appears to have remained buoyant thanks to persistently strong international commercial contacts. The city wall appears to go out of use in the 6th Century, and the transition to Islamic rule and culture seems peaceful, with evidence of continued use and revitalisation of parts of the former Byzantine town outside the Islamic town walls. By the 10th Century AD, the

Roman-Byzantine town seems to have come to the end of its ancient history, as adjacent medieval Islamic Aila declined during the Fatimid period and was eclipsed by other, more formidable urban centres in the region.

Dr Parker stressed the cooperation he received from the Aqaba Region Authority, which has altered some city development masterplans in order to preserve antiquities that were discovered by the project.

### The survey

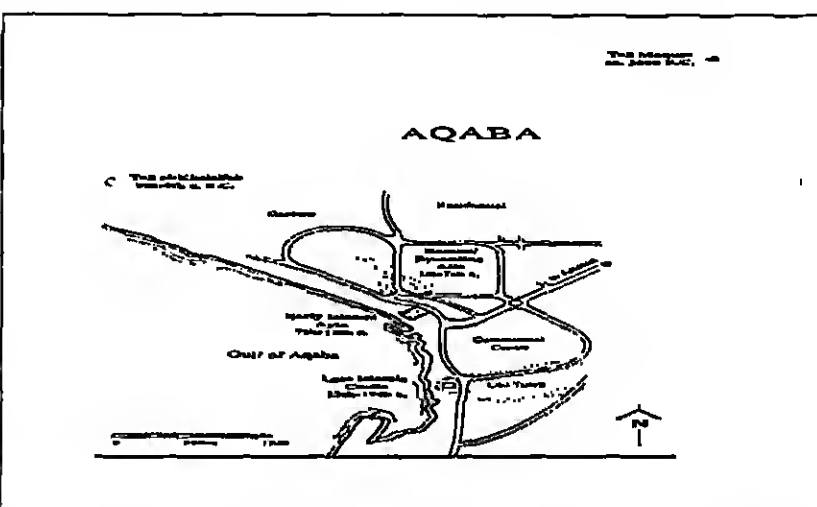
The 1994-98 survey of the southern Wadi Araba has recorded a total of 334 ancient "sites," with the periods best represented by artifacts being the Chalcolithic, Early Bronze, Early Roman/Nabataean, and Late Roman. Among the new discoveries in the last two seasons are a segment of a paved, three-metre-wide ancient road south of Ghandal, an ancient stone quarry near a small, unexcavated, late 2nd Century AD Roman fort north of Aqaba, and uninscribed milestones. Most of the sites identified in the survey were probably nomadic campsites, along with some cemeteries, stone rings, and stone cairns (probably grave markers), and some facilities that may have ser-



By Rami G. Khouri

viced or protected traffic in the Wadi Araba.

The Roman Aqaba Project has been sponsored by North Carolina State University and is affiliated with the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR), and the American Centre of Oriental Research (ACOR) in Amman. Funding has come from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Geographic Society, the Joukowsky Family Foundation, the Lockheed Martin Corporation, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, North Carolina State University, the Kyle-Kelso Foundation, and several private donors (all from the USA), with the cooperation and support of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and the Aqaba Regional Authority. The Department of Antiquities representative on the dig is Ms. Sawan Fahry.



Map of modern Aqaba showing the ancient and medieval settlement sites.

## Kuwait's 'aristocrat' tigers move to luxury new home

By Luke Phillips  
Agence France Presse

AS THE WORLD Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) marks its Year for the Tiger, two pampered Bengal tigers have been rehoused in luxury surroundings in a quiet suburb of Kuwait City.

The secure new home of the "aristocrat" tigers, which were born in captivity in Bahrain and Britain but have been raised together in Kuwait, boasts an air-conditioned den, a play area, a scratching tree and a pool. Fuad and Wasmia Abul, the owners of Michael and Suraya, have become minor celebrities in Kuwait since taking in the animals as cubs some six years ago, and people the world over seek their advice on rearing tigers.

Fuad puts the special relationship that has been fostered between the Kuwait couple and the tigers down to time investment, patience, and quite simply, love.

Fuad's diwanis, where his friends meet to talk, eat and play cards, is indicative of the devotion he shows the tigers. Countless photographs of the pair adorn the walls.

"I spend more time with the tigers than I do with my three sons," he said.

Their release into the wild or even a zoo is scoffed at. "To be released into the wild, they would first have to be trained how to hunt," said visiting English vet John Lewis.

Tigers normally join the hunt at eight weeks. They are taught to hunt by their mothers at six months, and can feed themselves at 16 months.

"They are pampered pets at the moment, whereas life in the jungle is a knife edge between survival and death," Lewis said.

"The tigers no longer eat fresh meat anyway," Fuad interjected. "It's only sliced cooked meat and canned cat food for them."

"More importantly, you have to remove the reason for the tiger's decline before reintroducing domesticated tigers to the wild," Lewis added.

The WWF says only five subspecies of tiger remain in the world, three now extinct after excessive habitat loss, poaching, growing human populations and the "expanded trade in tiger parts for traditional medicines."

**'Only five subspecies of tiger remain in the world, three now extinct after excessive habitat loss, poaching, growing human populations and the expanded trade in tiger parts for traditional medicines'**

In the case of Michael and Suraya, Lewis agreed that they would do no one any good by being released into the wild.

"They simply would not survive. Suraya is a circus throw-out. They have both been born into captivity. The important thing is that they receive heart-felt human contact," the vet said.

The tigers are already the average age for a non-captive tiger, and are expected to live for much longer. Michael's father lived until 22.

Lewis, a partner in the British-based International Zoo Veterinary Group, which deals with wild animals worldwide, oversaw the successful relocation of the huge beasts to their new larger cage within the Abul's compound.

"They are unique animals in an extraordinary situation," he told AFP. "They have an incredible bond with Fuad and Wasmia."

"Don't forget that they remain predatory animals, and you still hear tales of ringmasters and zookeepers being mauled and killed," Lewis said.

"Last year, for instance, Wasmia helped hand deliver Suraya's cubs. In a normal zoo-like environment, a keeper would go nowhere near a pregnant tiger for at least one week after it had given birth," said Lewis.

"In this case, the blind cubs struggled over to Wasmia and it was she who fed them. Such trust from a big game cat is unheard of," he added.

Similarly, when Suraya was sick earlier this year, Wasmia spent nine full days in the cage nursing the 114-kilogramme tiger back to health.

Lewis said the tigers suffered no dietary deficiencies and that their dental health, subsidised by calcium tablets, was surprisingly good.

"However, they will never be fit. Tigers exercise in two ways, hunting and patrolling, two things taken away from them in captivity," Lewis said.

The WWF estimates there are only 5,100 to 7,500 tigers today, a 95 per cent decrease since the beginning of the century, in 14 countries.

Tigers are covered by a Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, but the WWF says a tiger skeleton can still fetch the equivalent of 10 years' salary in some parts of Asia.

## Nonviolent community demands weapons to protect animals

By M.R. Narayan Swamy  
Agence France Presse

A 510-YEAR-OLD Hindu community which swears by non-violence against any living being now wants weapons to save endangered wildlife from fellow humans.

Since top Indian movie stars were charged with killing protected deer near this desert village in the northern state of Rajasthan about two months ago, the Bishnoi community has gone on a virtual war footing. And their anger is attracting the attention of local politicians seeking the Bishnoi vote in state elections next week.

"Enough is enough," said Arjun Ram, 76, a community leader at this sprawling village of about 6,000 people. "Our (bamboo) sticks are no match for trigger-happy hunters."

"The government must give us guns. Only then we can put an end to this menace of hunting once and for all."

Ram, a farmer, said he knew the demand for weapons went against the Bishnoi community's 29 founding principles, which include a pledge not to kill any living creature.

"We are helpless," he said in an interview, seated at a

village square and surrounded by some 100 young and elderly men.

"We don't want any hunting here, and that is the bottom line."

The Bishnois are a legendary sect in parts of northern and western India and have laid down their lives trying to protect animals and trees.

Legend has it that 294 men and 69 women from the Bishnoi community either killed themselves or were hacked to death when they tied themselves to trees which a local king wanted chopped near here in 1730. In the past decade, an unknown number of Bishnois — the estimates range from half-a-dozen to about 20 — have been shot dead by hunters who frequently sneak into forests here in search of deer.

This part of Rajasthan is home to several hundred species of deer, including the rare black buck, one of which was shot in the movie-star hunt.

Many of the deer live around Buda Bishnoiyan and are a great draw for both Indian and Western tourists.

But things have changed since the five Indian movie stars — two men and three women — allegedly hunted and killed some deer over several nights in September-October.

Only one of the actors was formally arrested, and he was swiftly released on bail.

Now villagers have turned against visitors and tourists, believing some of them might be studying the area by day in order to hunt at night.

"The killing of any bird or animal is prohibited in our community," said Poonam Chand Bishnoi, a 78-year-old lawmaker in Rajasthan. "No wonder the birds and animals live in peace in Bishnoi areas."

"Every year at least one Bishnoi dies fighting hunters," he said.

The Bishnois are bitter with the regional Hindu nationalist government for not strongly pursuing the charges against the movie stars.

And with elections to pick a local government in the state only a week away, the bitterness is expected to cost the nationalists dearly.

"It is a campaign issue," said lawmaker Poonam Chand Bishnoi.

Added Swarnam Ram Bishnoi, also a farmer: "For once we have come to understand clearly that the government's so-called pledges to protect the wildlife is nothing but a farce."

"We are disappointed the actors seem to have got away lightly."

## Dhaka zoo saves first elephant calf

By Shahab Ahmed  
Reuters

SULTANA'S IRON fenced world may be small and lacking in greenery but at least it has given her a chance to survive.

She is the first distressed elephant calf plucked from the wild to be raised by Bangladesh's Dhaka Zoo and already she is showing signs of recovery.

Had she not been taken there by forest rangers, Sultana might have been slaughtered by poachers, sharing the fate of thousands of other elephants. She was just a few days old when she was found in October.

Despite government pledges to conserve Bangladesh's dwindling elephant population, a protection law drafted in 1974 remains largely ineffective.

Under the watchful eye of zoo vets who named her, Sultana spends most of her time sleeping.

It is food that gets her most excited, and visitors sometimes get her a little annoyed, British-trained vet Begum Nurjahan told Reuters.

"By December 3 she weighed 105 kg and had grown 17 cm," Nurjahan said.

Sultana weighed only 65 kg when she was found abandoned, deep in Bangladesh's south-eastern Chittagong

Hill Tracts, bordering India and Myanmar, she said.

Nurjahan has become something of a surrogate mother, making time to play with her as well as to feed her.

"I feed her pasteurised milk laced with rice powder and vitamins six times a day," she said.

"And the results are visible and positive," Zoo curator Mahbubur Rahman added. "When the baby is not sleeping she apparently looks for her mother." Sultana was abandoned by her family as farmers drove them away from grazing in rice fields.

Rahman said he was not happy when forest department officials telephoned him to help save the abandoned calf.

Nursing an elephant to health and keeping her going would surely be an uphill task.

"It was the first time we've faced the problem of nursing a baby elephant. The calf seemed to be only three to four days old when she was found stuck in a pool of water in October," he said.

Forest dwellers had waited two days before calling for help, confident that the calf's cries would attract its mother.

But her mother had either gone too far away or was too frightened to return, Rahman quoted one forest ranger as say-

ing. "Hesitantly, we decided to bring her to Dhaka. She had to walk five kilometres to the nearest highway to ride a van for another 435 km journey to the zoo," Rahman said.

"When Sultana arrived at the zoo on October 28 her condition was far from satisfactory. She was suffering from diarrhoea, still in shock and refusing to take anything," Rahman said. "But she started responding to care and treatment soon and now we are hoping that she will survive," he added.

Dhaka Zoo had done a great job nursing Sultana to health despite the zoo's limitations, said Anisuzzaman Khan, an elephant specialist from the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

"But a baby elephant is dependant on its mother's milk for up to 18 months," Khan said.

"After some time in captivity it should be released in the wild again so it can try to find its real mother," he added.

But illegal poaching remains the highest obstacle to returning Sultana to the jungle.

Only 450 Asian elephants roamed the Chittagong Hill Tracts area according to a 1992 survey by the IUCN and World

Wide Fund for Nature. At least 22 have died since then.

"Their number is depleting as poachers hunt for ivory and sometimes also kill others in the herds," he said.

Poaching was more frequent close to the Myanmar border, he said.

"There they take away everything — skin, meat and even the entrails of the elephants," he said.

Elephants are facing an increasingly hard time trying to eke out an existence in their natural habitat, Khan said.

With farmers encroaching further and further into the forest and with the spectre of poachers still looming, the animals were fighting an almost losing battle, he said.

But elephants have hit back, trampling homes, destroying rice fields and killing more than 30 people in south-eastern Bangladesh in recent years.

Forest officials say poachers and landmines planted by Myanmar to curtail the movement of separatist militants along its border with Bangladesh have been to blame. Some poachers are believed to come from across the border, although Bangladeshis are also involved.







## Daily Business

A review of news from the Arabic Press

### Central Bank outlines monetary policy, measures implemented during this year

**AMMAN** — A memorandum presented to the Lower House of Parliament, the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) outlined the Monetary Policy and measures it undertook during 1998 and indicated that, as a result of the economic slowdown which started three years ago, the CBJ was overburdened and had to exert more efforts to maintain monetary stability and dinar convertibility.

The CBJ highlighted a new facility which was started in March when it allowed banks to make overnight dinar deposits at the Central Bank so long as the deposits are no less than JD1 million. Another achievement highlighted by the CBJ was its success in using the available monetary tools to confront the pressure of high demand for dollars due to the unstable political situation in the region. "The comfortable level of foreign exchange at the Central Bank has enabled it to meet the needs of the local market for foreign currency without delay or administrative measures on movement of funds and without affecting the convertibility of the dinar," the memorandum said.

In order to provide suitable financing to productive sectors, the CBJ extended an additional JD30 million of credits at a preferential 6.5 per cent interest rate to the Industrial Development Bank to bring the total to JD40 million. Another JD10 million were extended by the CBJ to the Agricultural Credit Corporation at a preferential 5.25 per cent interest rate to bring the total to JD20 million. Alongside the aforementioned credits, the Central Bank said it extends credit lines to commercial banks to encourage national exports. The interest rate on these credits stand at seven per cent, two percentage points below the nine per cent rediscount rate.

In the area of legislative reform, the Central Bank finalised a new banking law and another for setting up an institution for guaranteeing deposits. Both laws are currently being reviewed at the Bureau of Legislation.

Within the framework of developing and activating the control and supervision regulations on the banking institutions, the Central Bank took a number of measures in 1998 to control risks emanating from credit concentration and to build allocations/reserves to face doubtful debts in addition to adopting international accounting standards and accounting disclosures.

Moreover, the CBJ adopted the comprehensive and internationally-accepted methods to evaluate the position of banks in terms of capital, assets, management, profitability and liquidity besides implementing the concepts of comprehensive control to include the field inspection of all branches of bank inside and outside the Kingdom. "The bank took the necessary preparations to receive the periodic banking information from the banks electronically in order to consolidate the control process," the memorandum said.

To face the "year 2000 problem," the CBJ has readied an integrated working programme on the internal level on the one hand and on the level of the banking system on the other hand. A higher council formed by the CBJ to develop a contemporary payments system that would be quick, accurate and cost-efficient has formulated a strategy and a mechanism for its implementation.

### Hong Kong's business climate to stay poor next year — survey

**HONG KONG (AFP)** — Hong Kong's business climate is expected to remain poor in 1999 amid the territory's economic woes, and is expected to improve substantially only by 2001, according to the results of a survey released here Monday.

The survey, carried out by the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, showed that 66 per cent of the 551 respondents believed business conditions would be "poor to very poor" in the New Year. Just one per cent of respondents, all of whom were members of the chamber, said business conditions would be very good, five per cent felt they would be good and 28 per cent said they would be satisfactory.

But a majority of the respondents believed business conditions would improve in 2000 and 2001 in line with an uptick in the economy.

Fifty-two per cent said they expected satisfactory business conditions through to the end of 2001. Fifty-seven per cent expect the economy to become stronger over the three-year period to the end of 2001.

The survey was released as Hong Kong battles its first recession in 13 years. The economy posted its biggest quarterly contraction on record in the three months to September, shrinking 7.0 per cent.

Unemployment has risen to a record 5.5 per cent in the three months to November, while major employers announce pay freezes almost daily.

The poll found that 89 per cent of respondents blamed the poor economy on the fallout of the regional economic crisis sparked by the flood of the Thai baht in July last year which crushed stock markets and currencies.

However, 63 per cent of the respondents also blamed the policies of the government of Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa and 59 per cent blamed a slowdown in China's economic growth.

Fifty-four per cent blamed the territory's woes on U.S. economic policies and 41 per cent on Japan.

Only 18 per cent of respondents expect an expansion of economic activity next year, and eight per cent expect the economy to grow by two to four per cent.

Ten per cent expected growth of one per cent, 16 per cent expect zero growth, 20 per cent expect minus one per cent and 45 per cent expect minus two to minus four per cent growth.

A total of 77 per cent of the respondents thought wage levels were too high and only 12 per cent said that they were "just right."

Eighty-eight per cent of the respondents thought wage levels were too high and only 12 per cent said that they were "just right."

On employment plans, 11 per cent expected staff levels to fall while 57 per cent expected no change.

The survey also showed that most respondents expect very low consumer price inflation for the year ahead.

Thirty-two per cent expect inflation to be negative, 38 per cent expect zero inflation, 28 per cent expect inflation of up to four per cent and only two per cent expect more than four per cent.

### Four banks raising \$600m for UAE telecom company

**ABU DHABI (AFP)** — The Arab telecommunications company Thuraya has instructed a consortium of four banks to arrange a \$600 million loan, the press here reported Monday.

Two banks from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — the Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank and the Union National Bank — along with the French bank Societe Generale and ANZ of Australia make up the consortium, said a statement from Thuraya Satellite Telecommunications Company.

The loan, to be paid back over seven years, is to finance part of the cost of building and launching two geostationary satellites ordered from the U.S. company Hughes Space and Communications International for around one billion dollars in 1997.

Thuraya is a joint venture between around 15 Arab companies, including Eilat (26 per cent), Abu Dhabi Investment Company (20 per cent), ArabSat (10 per cent) and Q-Tel of Qatar (10 per cent).

The company's first satellite is due to go into orbit in May 2000.

### Number of shareholders in Germany rises in 1998

**FRANKFURT (AFP)** — German shareholders were not discouraged by the turbulence this year on the world's financial markets and the proportion of the population owning shares increased in 1998, the DAI share institute said Monday.

The results of a survey commissioned by the institute showed that more than 4.5 million people in Germany owned shares in 1998, compared with 3.9 million in 1997.

And the ratio of shareholders to the overall population aged 14 and over increased to an average 7.1 per cent in 1998 from 6.2 per cent in 1997, the survey showed.

But "what was particularly pleasing was the increase in shareholder numbers in the second half of the year," said DAI head Ruediger von Rosen.

In the period from July to December, the shareholding proportion of the population averaged 7.3 per cent, compared with 6.9 per cent in the first six months.

"This is a clear indication that the turbulence has not scared off German private investors," von Rosen said.

Furthermore, the share is increasingly seen as a long-term form of investment, DAI said.

In addition to direct shareholdings, the number of people in Germany who invested in share investment funds increased to 3.2 million in 1998 from 2.3 million in 1997, the institute said.

The survey, which was carried out by the market research institute, Infratest Burke Finanzforschung, and covered a sample of more than 25,000 people, also showed that there were regional differences in share ownership.

While the proportion of people who own shares stood at 8.3 per cent in western Germany, the ratio was only 2.5 per cent in the former communist east, the survey showed.

### Russian jobless rate seen rising

**MOSCOW (AFP)** — The Russian economy ministry forecasts that unemployment in the Russian Federation will rise by 71 per cent by 2001 to more than 14 million people, ITAR-TASS has reported.

Quoting deputy economy minister Andrei Sharonov, the report said the number of people out of work was expected to go up from 8.4 million (11.6 per cent of the active population) now to 14.4 million people within the next three years.

### India allows foreign insurance companies

**NEW DELHI (AFP)** — The Indian cabinet has cleared a plan to allow foreign insurance companies to enter the state-run insurance sector, the finance minister has announced.

Yashwant Sinha told reporters that holdings by foreign firms in joint venture companies would be capped at 40 per cent.

"The cabinet has decided on a ceiling of 26 per cent to the foreign collaborator... while the balance 14 per cent can be taken up by foreign financial institutions and others. Sixty per cent should be held by Indian promoters," Sinha said.

More than a dozen foreign insurers have already signed memorandums of understanding with Indian partners and opened representative offices here in the hope of the sector being opened up.

Indians are estimated to spend only \$1.7 per person a year on insurance compared to almost \$30 in Thailand.

Two state-owned companies monopolise the market, one specialising in life insurance and the other in health and general insurance.

Trade bodies have said there was potential for 250 million people to be insured and opening the sector would help mobilise around \$50 billion for investment in such core areas as infrastructure.

Only five per cent of India's 960 million people have life insurance.

The finance minister said laws to end the monopoly of the state-run Life Insurance Corporation and General Insurance Corporation would be amended "to facilitate the entry of private Indian companies in the sector."

A.F.M. TRADE Monday, 28-12-98			
ACCESS 4646868			
Company	Open	Close	Change
BANKS			
ARAB BK	210,000	209,500	-0.24%
NTL BK	1,550	1,600	+3.23%
CAIRO AMMAN BK	2,600	2,750	+5.77%
BL OF JO	1,280	1,280	0.00%
WIDEL EAST BK	1,020	1,040	+1.96%
THE HOUSING BK	2,710	2,720	+0.37%
JO. KUWAIT BK	1,570	1,580	+0.64%
JO. GULF BK	0,690	0,690	0.00%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1,700	1,670	-1.76%
JO. INVEST. FIN. BK	1,430	1,470	+2.80%
BEIT ELMAL	0,690	0,680	-1.45%
ARAB BING COR	2,480	2,480	0.00%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0,560	0,570	+1.79%
BANKS INDEX	275,570	275,570	0.00%
INSURANCE			
ARAB INS	1,920	1,920	0.00%
INSURANCE INDEX	123,200	123,200	0.00%
SERVICES			
ELECTRIC POWER	1,460	1,470	+0.68%
HOTEL & TOURISM	10,200	10,400	+1.96%
ARAB INTL HOTELS	4,750	4,750	0.00%
JO. INTL TRADING CENT	0,290	0,290	0.00%
ARAB INTL FOR INVS &	1,920	1,910	-0.52%
UNIFIED LAMO TRANS	1,100	1,100	0.00%
UNITED FOR FINANCIAL	1,170	1,110	-5.13%
SERVICES INDEX	106,000	106,000	0.00%
INDUSTRY			
CEMENT	3,040	3,000	-1.32%
PHOSPHATE	1,480	1,510	+2.03%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	10,150	10,200	+0.49%
THE IND. COMM. & AGRIC	1,150	1,210	+5.22%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	2,540	2,540	0.00%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1,200	1,200	0.00%
JO. PIPES	1,080	1,080	0.00%
DAR AL DAWA	5,000	4,900	-2.00%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0,560	0,560	0.00%
JO. STEEL	0,980	1,020	+4.08%
ARAB ALUMINIUM	1,970	1,900	-3.55%
CHLORINE	1,240	1,240	0.00%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0,390	0,390	0.00%
PAPER CONVERTING	0,830	0,830	0.00%
NTL IND	0,370	0,350	-5.41%
PETRO-CHEMICAL	0,350	0,330	-5.71%
ROCKWOOL	0,300	0,290	-3.33%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	1,100	1,100	0.00%
INDUSTRY INDEX	75,060	75,060	-0.17%
PARALLEL			
EXPORT BK (75	0,870	0,870	0.00%
JO. TRADING FACILITIES	0,420	0,440	+4.76%
UNION INVS CORP	0,700	0,680	-2.86%
TL EXCHAL	0,780	0,780	0.00%
ADVANCED PHAR	0,560	0,560	0.00%
ARAB INVESTORS	0,950	1,000	+5.26%
ARAB INTL TRADE	0,210	0,210	0.00%
OPTICAL & AUDIO	0,510	0,500	-1.96%
RAMCO	0,280	0,280	0.00%
TEXTILE & PLASTIC	0,240	0,230	-4.17%
WICKLE EAST PHAR (90	0,570	0,570	0.00%
UNION TOBACCO	2,680	2,610	-2.61%
AL-KAZI	0,530	0,520	-1.89%
UNITED ENG. IND	0,200	0,200	0.00%
PEARL	0,450	0,430	-4.44%
NTL POULTRY	0,550	0,540	-1.82%
ARAB JO. INVS	1,030	1,080	+4.85%
GRAND INDEX	166,29	166,29	0.00%

### HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR DECEMBER, TUESDAY 29, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

**ARIES:** (March 21 to April 19) You've learned something difficult over the last few weeks, whether you wanted to or not. Now you're going to find life quite a bit easier, more fun and more profitable. You've had to stick to a pretty tough regimen lately, but it looks like it's made you stronger. Just do what needs to be done, and quickly.

**Taurus:** (April 20 to May 20) Your horizons have broadened. Look like there's more available now than there was in the past few weeks. You've either had an increase in your income, or all the sales or on. You could find some magnificent bargains if you're willing to go just a little further than usual. Check out a place that has items for the home on sale.

**GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) Somebody's still pushing you to be accountable, follow rules, stick to a budget or something equally awful. You're in a good frame of mind for learning, however. You can find the information you need if you look for it. The tough part is actually going something you've been resisting. Well, face up to it; you're on the downhill slope.

**CANCER:** (June 22 to July 21) Looks like there's a hassle at work, and you've been wondering whom to talk to about it. That's where your friends come in. You just need somebody to listen to your side of the story. Once its been told, forget about it. Don't carry a grudge. The situation can clear up almost by magic if you'll just let go of it.

**LEO:** (July 22 to August 21) You're still attracting attention. In a way, these people simply admire your brilliance. In another way, they're waiting for you to put up or shut up. Get the job done before it's due and under budget. It means you'll have to push yourself, but that's OK. Now is a great time to do exactly that.

**VIRGO:** (August 22 to September 22) Sometimes you think its what you do that makes all the difference for everybody. You do have a great impact on the people in your life, but there are other forces involved, too. Its not your fault if things don't go perfectly, and its also not entirely to your credit if they do. Today, your attitude makes a huge difference.

**LIBRA:** (September 23 to October 22) You may have surprised yourself recently with your ability to wheel and deal. That's not something most Libras do. You're more likely to cave and let the other person have whatever he or she wants. Today, you've got a bit of an edge. Give it one more try and see how far you can get.

**SCORPIO:** (October 23 to November 21) Use new skills you've acquired lately to push yourself up the ladder of success. You've always been indispensable, but now something about you is really setting you apart from the crowd. Make sure the people who do the hiring and firing know what you know by showing off just a little.

**SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) You've always wanted adventure, excitement, distant horizons, new languages to learn and exotic foods to eat. Don't worry. You'll be able to work some of that into your busy schedule, but probably not today. Instead of struggling over where you are, relax and be there on purpose. You could make quite a bit of money while you're at it.

**CAPRICORN:** (December 22 to January 20) A weight you've been carrying around is about to dissolve. Its been influencing your relationships with your family and domestic environment. It'll be easier to take care of that and anything else you can think of now. So don't dwell on old difficulties. Look around to see what new kind of new trouble you can get into, just for fun.

**AQUARIUS:** (January 21 to February 19) Somebody's trying to tell you something, without using words, but rather through innuendoes and gestures, a hint, a frown, a smile. Its all supposed to add up to something significant. If you feel clueless, just come right out and ask. This puzzle is so complicated, you'll never figure it out on your own.

**PISCES:** (February 20 to March 20) If you knew everything, there'd be nothing left to study, right? That would be as boring as anything could get, and you hate to be bored. Today, see what you delve into in depth, because that's the mood you're in. You need a subject so deep, so complicated, so fascinating, that you'll never be able to master it in a day.

Birth Stone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

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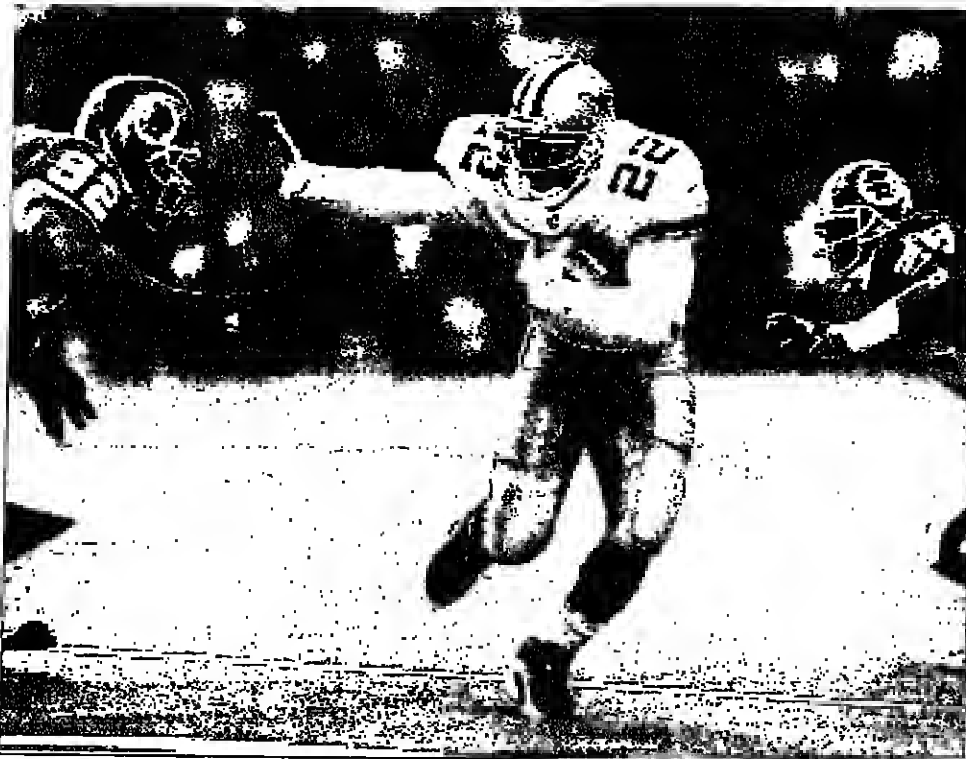
# Cardinals make NFL playoffs for first time in 16 years

TEMPE, Arizona (AFP) — Arizona won a last-second thriller Sunday for the club's first American football playoff berth in 16 years while Terrell Davis and Emmitt Smith cracked long-awaited rushing marks.

Arizona beat San Diego 16-13 on Chris Jacke's season-best 52-yard field goal as time expired, launching the Cardinals into the National Football League playoffs for the first time since moving from St. Louis.

"You get tired of that longest streak not to make the playoffs," said Arizona quarterback Jake Plummer after ending the NFL's greatest playoff drought. "But we have a new team and a new attitude."

Eric Metcalf's 46-yard kick return set up the game winner after the Cardinals allowed an equalising touchdown pass with 16 seconds to play. It was Jacke's third late-game winning kick in as many



Dallas Cowboys running back Emmitt Smith readies to use the stiff arm against Washington Redskins Jamal Duff (L) as Chris Dishman (R) moves in during the first quarter in Irving, Texas. Smith became the all-time career leader in rushing touchdowns with his 124th score in the second quarter to pass Marcus Allen (Reuters photo)

title since 1989, when Nigerian Christian Okoye of Kansas City led NFL rushers with 1,480 yards.

Playoff pairings were completed Sunday, with Denver and the New York Jets having already clinched first-round AFC byes while Minnesota and Atlanta had already sealed NFC byes.

Next weekend will see Arizona travel to Dallas and Green Bay visit San Francisco in the NFC playoffs while Buffalo travels to Miami and New England visits Jacksonville in the AFC playoffs.

The Cardinals have not won a playoff game since 1947 but Dallas has struggled on offense in recent weeks and could be vulnerable.

The Green Bay Packers have a history of knocking San Francisco out of the playoffs, but the 49ers won a home-field edge for the game with a 38-19 victory over St. Louis, their 17th win in a row over the Rams.

"We have to approach this week with confidence and a business-like approach," said 49ers coach Steve Mariucci. "We will not worry about the past and we won't worry about the future. We've got what we want, a chance to play the Packers in the playoffs and a shot at redemption."

Steve Young had two touchdown passes and ran for another in the victory. "I don't think you can percentage the advantage," Young said. "I don't know what I can tell you other than it's better for us to play at home. We have a good feeling going into next week."

Miami was pounded 38-16 by Atlanta, which finished a club-record 14-2, but the Dolphins will host Buffalo, which rested Doug Flutie and most of their starters in a 45-33 victory at New Orleans.

The Jets pounded New England 31-10 behind four Vinny Testaverde touchdown passes in a battle of New York coach Bill Parcells' current and former clubs.

The Patriots will have injured quarterback Drew Bledsoe back when they play next week at Jacksonville, which plays host to Pittsburgh on Monday in the NFL's final regular-season game.



Phoenix Cardinals fans celebrate on top of the goal posts after their team defeated the San Diego Chargers 16-13 on a last-second field goal. The Cardinals advance to the playoffs for the first time since 1982 (Reuters photo)

weeks. "On the last kick, I saw it was pretty much straight down the middle," said Jacke, a member of the 1996 champion Green Bay Packers. "I just turned to the sideline and was mobbed."

Arizona (9-7) also got four interceptions from safety Kwame Lassiter, matching an NFL record. "It was just being at the right place at the right time," Lassiter said.

Had Arizona lost, the final berth would have gone to Tampa Bay, which routed Cincinnati 35-0 but settled for an 8-8 season.

Denver's Davis moved past O.J. Simpson with the third-best rushing season in NFL history, gaining 178 yards on 29 carries to finish with a league-high 2,008 yards for the season. The Broncos snapped a two-losing skid by beating Seattle 28-21.

"This is very special,"

Davis said. "I knew it was going to be hard. It was tough, but I kept running hard, so I could get it. It was pretty wild in the huddle. You should have been there."

"As the game was going on, the offensive line kept asking me how many yards I had. When I got to the sidelines, the coaches were telling me what I needed. The offensive line was more excited than I was. From the first play, they were itching to get out there and

they were committed to getting 2,000 yards."

Davis, 26, fell 97 yards short of Eric Dickerson's record 1984 season and 45 yards shy of Barry Sanders' 1997 total but edging Simpson by five yards, although Simpson played two fewer games in his 1973 campaign.

"He is the best back I've ever played with and he's the best back I've seen since I've been playing," said Denver quarterback John Elway. "With his consistency and toughness, there's no one better than him."

The Broncos finished the season 14-2, having already clinched a bye in the first playoff round and home-field advantage throughout the playoffs in defense of their Super Bowl title. But Sunday was for Smith.

"We had a countdown going in the huddle," Elway said. "He started off with two big rushes and the fans were really into it. We were getting news from the sidelines on how close he was."

Smith became the NFL's all-time rushing touchdown leader in his fourth try, running for his 124th in Dallas' 23-7 triumph over Washington. The ninth-year veteran surpassed Marcus Allen on a one-yard touchdown early in the second quarter after failing in three prior December games.

Only Sanders or Smith had won the NFL rushing

## U.S. Olympic Committee panel to probe bribery claim

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)

A U.S. Olympic Committee panel probing allegations that bribes helped Salt Lake win the 2002 Winter Olympics will hold its first meeting Tuesday.

Salt Lake Organising Committee officials will not attend the closed-door meeting in Washington, a spokesperson said. No agenda has been released, but the meeting will likely build the framework for the probe. Salt Lake bid officials allegedly paid for scholarships for relatives of

International Olympic Committee members, provided IOC members with free medical services, and gave numerous gifts in violation of IOC rules.

The USOC probe will be headed by former Sen. George Mitchell, and includes baseball union boss Donald Fehr, as well as Ken Duberstein, Roberta Cooper Ramo, Jeff Benz, and USOC president Bill Hybl.

The USOC investigation should lead to changes in future bid and selection processes,

said USOC executive director Dick Schultz. The investigation is expected to be completed in February.

But an investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice is the most serious probe, since the Justice Department has the power to subpoena witnesses and compel testimony and to hand out indictments.

SLOC officials say they will cooperate with all of the probes and get back to preparing for the Games.

## Solo French yachtswoman battles storm

AUCKLAND (AFP) — Solo French yachtswoman Isabelle Autissier was Monday sailing in the same weather system that wreaked havoc in the Sydney to Hobart classic but it may benefit her.

Autissier, taking part in the Aroundalone yacht race, was Saturday forced into a remote bay in the Australian state of Tasmania to make quick repairs to her yacht PRB.

That put her back to fourth in the Class 1 field in the around the globe race now in its second leg from Cape Town to Auckland.

But a race official here said while the leaders, including Italian Giovanni Soldini, were caught Monday with little air in the mid-Tasman Sea, Autissier was moving much faster in the stormy system which has cost at least two lives with at least 10 sailors missing in the Sydney to Hobart race.

On the Internet web site Autissier describes the seas as "war-like".

Mid-afternoon Monday she was near the point where two years ago her boat rolled and she had to be rescued by the Australian Navy.

## PICTURES OF 1998



A file picture dated 14 June 1998 shows Micheal Jordan of the Chicago Bulls celebrating after winning game 6 of the NBA finals against the Utah Jazz at the Delta Center in Salt Lake City, Utah. The Bulls won the game 87-86 to win their sixth NBA Championship (AFP photo)



A file picture dated Nov. 26, 1998 shows U.S. tennis player Pete Sampras standing behind a cake shaped as a 'six' after the latter claimed the year-end World No. 1 spot for the sixth straight year at the ATP Tour World Championship in Hanover. Sampras did not need to lift a racket to clinch the honour after Chile's Marcelo Rios, the World No. 2, pulled out with back pain. Sampras has now broken the record of straight years at the top that was in 1974-78 by U.S. Jimmy Connors (AFP photo)

## Maradona to game

GENOVA (AFP)

Former football star Diego Maradona said that he will return to the game in the near future, but he will not play for the Argentine national team.

Maradona, who was suspended for two years after a failed attempt to play for the Argentine national team, said he was now in good health and was ready to return to the game.

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	Sean Connery & Nicholas Cage .. in	Meryl Streep & Kevin Bacon .. in	Comedian Mohammad Huneidi .. in	CONCORDE '1' Mohammad Huneidi .. in	ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Sharon Stone & Dustin Hoffman .. in	ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Helena Bonham & Linus Roache .. in	Watch out for the new play
	THE ROCK	THE RIVER WILD	SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY	KAMANNANA CONCORDE '2' Adel Imam .. in	SPHERE	WINGS OF THE DOVE	
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Austrian Hermann Maier is airborne as he goes through a corner on his way to take the fastest time in the World Cup Downhill training, in Bormio. Hermann Maier clocked the best time with 1:56.20 (Reuters photo)

## Stern makes 'final' offer as NBA season likely to be cancelled

NEW YORK (AP) — Five hours of secret talks and a "final" offer from the commissioner didn't do much.

With 1 1/2 weeks left until the possible cancellation of the entire season, NBA owners and players still can't make a deal.

The opposing sides held a secret meeting — David Stern called it an "attempt to salvage the season" — Sunday at a hotel outside Denver. It ended with the sides still apart on several key issues.

"I really don't think there will be a season," said Jeffrey Mishkin, the league's chief legal officer. "We've gone as far as we can go. We're done."

The league improved its proposal in several areas, and the union offered further restrictions on the salaries of the highest-paid players.

"We advised the union that no further offers will be made," Stern said in a statement that described both sides' proposals as final offers.

Union director Billy Hunter disagreed.

"We offered a comprehensive proposal to the NBA," Hunter said. "The NBA countered our proposal and we indicated to them that we were willing to negotiate further, which unfortunately they were unwilling to do at this time."

Despite the dire forecasts

from the league, there remains time to save the season. The league's Board of Governors will meet Jan. 7, and the commissioner has said he will recommend canceling the remainder of the season if no accord is reached by that date.

The dispute is threatening to cause the first cancellation of an entire season for the first time in the history of North American professional major leagues.

"I think the season is virtually gone," Mishkin said. "I've been here for 20 years, and I've never seen this kind of intransigence from the union."

The league improved its offer in several areas:

— On the percentage of revenue to be shared with players, the league moved one point to 53 per cent in year four, 53.5 per cent in year five and 54 in year six.

— The league agreed to keep the \$1.1 million exception in its current form, whereby it can be used once every two years to exceed the salary cap to sign an additional player.

— Owners agreed to the union's proposed limit of a 10 percent escrow tax on player salaries in years four, five and six of the agreement.

— The NBA increased its proposed minimum and maximum salaries, with the biggest increases for players

with between seven and nine years of experience.

— Owners offered a 25 per cent raise for players under the rookie scale who have their option picked up for a fourth year.

"Unfortunately, this was not enough for the union," Stern said.

The exact concessions offered by the union weren't immediately clear, although the players were thought to have changed their offer on a maximum salary to include all players with less than nine years' experience instead of seven years' experience.

The union said Hunter will discuss the union's latest proposal in detail Monday.

Plans for Sunday's meeting, held at a hotel near Denver's airport, weren't finalized until Saturday night. The league was represented by Stern, deputy commissioner Russ Granik and special assistant Bob Lanier. The union was represented by Hunter, president Patrick Ewing and chief outside lawyer Jeffrey Kessler.

The meeting developed following Wednesday night's secret session in Los Angeles between Stern and Hunter.

No further talks are scheduled, and a deal must be made by mid-January to salvage a 45 to 50-game schedule.

The meeting developed following Wednesday night's secret session in Los Angeles between Stern and Hunter.

## Maradona wants end to game violence

BUENOS AIRES (AFP) — Former football star Diego Maradona said that his New Year's toast will be for an end to violence in football, and disclosed that he feels discriminated against when seeking work in Argentina.

In an interview with a Buenos Aires radio station Saturday, he said that he would drink to an end to football violence "because that takes Argentine passion away, and what's worse is, you can't take your kids to the match."

Maradona also said that people in Argentina discriminate against "cabecitas negras," a pejorative expression applied to darker-complexioned white people with black hair, usually from the country's interior.

Maradona fits the description. "Many people deny it, but there's discrimination," Maradona said. "Nobody tolerates cabecitas negras and nobody wants them in Buenos Aires; everybody wants them to go home to the provinces."

The former world-famous player, who could be named "Player of the Century" by Argentina's sportswriters, said last Tuesday he feels persecuted after admitting he was addicted to drugs, a fact he related to not being able to land a coach's job.

"If I talked about the drugs it was to help kids," he said, and insisted he would never regret taking part in a campaign against drug addiction. Asked if he would play in game against Badajoz, a Spanish team, the now-overweight Maradona joked that "I'll be the ball."

But he said he would try to show up in shape. "I don't want to show a 38-year-old Maradona that's not the real thing. But there's a few things I can do: Kick a corner shot, a free kick. I don't know," he said.

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## Sydney-to-Hobart race

# Miracle rescues resume but 6 feared dead

HOBART (AFP) —

Australian emergency services plucked six yachtsmen to safety Monday in dramatic liferaft rescues on a tragic and chaotic day in the Sydney to Hobart yacht race which is feared to have claimed six lives.

In the first of two miracle rescues, four men from the cutter Winston Churchill's nine-man crew were saved after being spotted by an air-force Orion and winched aboard a navy helicopter.

And just as rescue efforts were to be called off for the night, the cutter's second liferaft, wrenched from the first in mountainous seas Sunday, was found and two men aboard lifted off by a Sea King chopper operating from the frigate Newcastle.

"Two crew were winched from the Winston's second liferaft and flown to Merimbula (on the New South Wales south coast)," officials at the race headquarters in Hobart said.

"Three others had been tossed out (by heavy seas) earlier in the day and there's no sign of them," he said.

The two rescued were well, although one needed medical attention. The search for the three missing would continue overnight, officials said.

Fierce storms swallowed the prestigious race fleet, sending the frontrunners heading for a record finish but spelling disaster for 58 of the 115 starters forced to quit in conditions described as the worst in memory.

Crews reported winds of

up to 80 knots and treacherous seas as they tried to cross the forbidding Bass Strait that separates the mainland from the finish post in the island state of Tasmania.

Some 30 aircraft were involved in the search for the Winston Churchill, which had not been heard from since 9:00 pm. (1000 GMT) Sunday when it sent out a distress call saying the crew was abandoning ship.

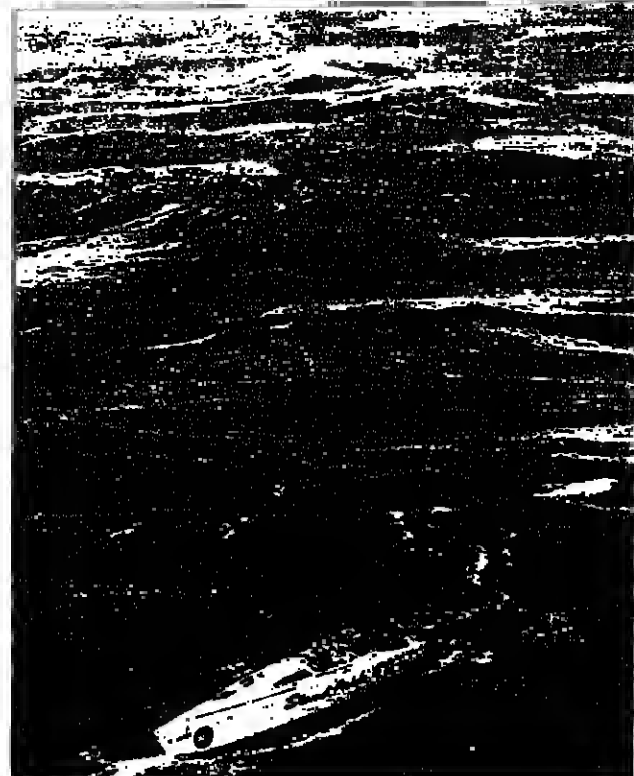
The first four rescued men, safe and well after 36 hours battling 10 metre (33 feet) seas and gale force winds, said their colleagues had clambered into a larger liferaft when the veteran boat was swamped by a wave.

Skipper Richard Winning said it had been a terrifying night in which his liferaft twice tipped over.

"The worst thing of the whole affair was that after we got into the liferaft and became separated from the others, the damned thing capsized twice on these great seas at night, which is bloody frightening, let me tell you," he told reporters.

"You have got four of us underneath this little canopy and the next thing is you are upside down. So one poor bastard has got to go out and ride it while the other three are inside."

On a dark day for international boating, and the worst in the Sydney-Hobart's history, two Australian crewmen died on the stricken yacht Business Post 581. Their bodies were left behind as the seven other crew were airlifted ashore



The injured crew of demasted Australian yacht 'Stand Aside' await rescue by helicopter as they tow a life-raft in Bass Strait during the Sydney-to-Hobart ocean race. Three sailors are confirmed dead as the yachts encounter the most treacherous conditions ever in the 54-year history of the 630 nautical mile sailing classic (AFP photo)

with minor injuries.

One of the men suffered a heart attack while the other drowned strapped to his harness as the boat capsized.

Prominent British yachtsman Glyn Charles was also confirmed dead by the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia after being swept overboard from Sword of Orion, which rolled in Bass Strait late Sunday.

Charles, who has sailed in four Admiral's Cups and represented Britain at the 1996 Olympic yachting regatta in Savannah, Georgia, had been in the water since 4:00 p.m. (0500 GMT) Sunday. He was one of 12 Britons in the race.

Race organisers Monday insisted safety was a matter for individual skippers in the event, which has previously

suffered only two fatalities in its 54-year history. None would discuss whether the challenge should have been postponed or abandoned.

Despite the tragedy, the organisers won support from Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer, who paid tribute to the emergency services.

"I guess some people will ask should there be a Sydney-Hobart yacht race. Yes, there should be, but any loss of life from sporting and recreational events is particularly tragic," Fischer told reporters in Melbourne.

The Maritime Safety Authority said all other yachts were accounted for — 56 people had been airlifted off yachts since the race started on Saturday and five boats have been abandoned at sea, most dismasted.

"Virtually everyone rescued has got an injury," said race spokesman David Gray. "Hand injuries, leg injuries, facial injuries. They really got pounded." Dozens have been treated in hospital.

Still in the race, American maxi Sayonara remained narrowly ahead of last year's line winner Brindabella in excellent time despite having to reduce sail. Ragamuffin was third.

The frontrunner was expected to sail into Hobart in the early hours of Tuesday.

The 630 nautical mile race runs from Sydney Harbour down mainland Australia's east coast, across Bass Strait, and on down the Tasmanian east coast, ending up the Derwent River at Hobart.

## Faced with NBA lockout, Divac to join Yugoslav team

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (AP) — Faced with a continuing NBA lockout,

Charlotte Hornets center Vlade Divac decided to join Yugoslav champion Red Star in the Euro basketball league, the Belgrade team officials said Monday.

Divac, who like many other locked out NBA stars is seeking to play in Europe, will start for Red Star in the Euro League match against Zalgiris, Lithuania, in Belgrade on Jan. 7.

He will face Portland Trail Blazers center Arvydas Sabonis who joined the Lithuanian team for the remainder of the lockout, said Red Star manager Vojislav Stojakovic.

Divac, who signed for LA Lakers in 1989 and played the last two seasons with the Charlotte Hornets before becoming a free agent, confirmed he was joining Red Star.

Divac, a Yugoslav, told the daily newspaper Politika that he had rejected a much better financial

offer to play for Kinder Bologna, and opted for the Belgrade team for patriotic

reasons.

Politika said that Divac and Red Star agreed that he

could return to the NBA

as soon as the lockout ended.

## 'Make A Difference'

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## Israeli forces shell Lebanese village

ARNOUN (R) — Israeli forces said they shelled suspected guerrilla targets in and around this south Lebanon village on Monday after their South Lebanon Army (SLA) allies found weapons in a house.

In Jerusalem, an Israeli army statement said the pro-Israeli militia bulldozed five uninhabited houses in the village, which lies just outside the Jewish state's south Lebanon occupation zone, before the bombardment.

"An SLA force that was on operational activity last night in the village of Arnoun in the eastern sector of the south Lebanon security zone uncovered a cache including explosives, a heavy machinegun and

food," the statement said.

"The force carried out searches of abandoned houses in the area which terrorists used to carry out activities against the Israeli army and the SLA. During the night, an SLA force destroyed the abandoned building and adjacent buildings in order to prevent the recurrence of the incident," it added.

The assault on Arnoun comes less than a week after Israeli warplanes killed seven civilians in a raid on suspected Hizbollah guerrilla targets, prompting the pro-Iranian group to fire a barrage of Katyusha rockets at northern Israel.

The Shi'ite Amal guerrilla organisation said in a statement earlier on Monday it

had attacked an Israeli patrol inside the 15-km deep security zone but there was no independent confirmation of the incident.

Hizbollah and other guerrilla groups are fighting to oust Israel and its SLA militia from Lebanon's south.

The Jewish state has controlled parts of the south since 1978 and set up its occupation zone in 1985, saying it needed to protect its borders from guerrilla attacks.

The Israeli government has said it is willing to withdraw from the zone provided the Lebanese government guarantees its security. Lebanon and Syria, the main power broker in the country, say Israel must pull out unconditionally.



A Lebanese man examines a house which was bulldozed overnight by Israeli troops along with other five empty houses in Arnoun village on the edge of the Jewish state's south Lebanon occupation zone on Monday (Reuters)

## Hamas' New Year's resolution: To keep fighting

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), which rejects the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords, warned Monday that it will keep up its war against the Jewish state.

"The holy war will continue and no one will be able to halt it," Hamas' military branch, Izzeddine Al Qassam, said in a New Year's statement.

The group also warned Israel

against arresting Palestinians or confiscating Arab land, saying, "the long arm of Izzeddine Al Qassam will not be cut off by security traps" set by the Jewish state.

"We will continue the battle in accordance with the 1999 plan," it added without elaborating.

Hamas has claimed responsibility for most of the attacks on Israelis since the signing of the 1993 Oslo accord.

## Netanyahu denies reports about Golan Heights withdrawal

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Monday denied press reports that he had a few months ago considered a plan for a withdrawal from the Golan Heights, occupied in 1967.

He told the weekly cabinet meeting that reports that he had reached agreement with Labour Party leader Ehud Barak on such a withdrawal were "completely without foundation," according to a statement from Netanyahu's office.

The Hebrew daily Yediot Aharonot reported Thursday that Netanyahu and Barak had conducted secret negotiations during the summer, with the aim of establishing a government of national unity. The talks eventually failed.

It claimed that as part of the talks, the two had agreed on "a withdrawal from most of the Golan."

The paper cited an unnamed official who said the men had not spelled out the exact limit of the pullback but confirmed they had come to an agreement on the matter.

Netanyahu told the cabinet that the only agreement with Barak was on the need to renew negotiations with the Syrians, which have been suspended for nearly three years.

Damascus is demanding that Netanyahu keep to a pledge to return the Golan to Syria allegedly made by the previous Israeli government.

Israel occupied the Golan from Syria during the 1967 Middle East war and illegally annexed it in 1981.

## Saleh: No plans to eject U.N. workers

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq has no immediate plans to eject U.N. humanitarian workers who help distribute supplies to Iraqis under the U.N.-approved oil-for-food programme, Iraq's trade minister said Monday.

But the minister, Mohammad Mehdi Saleh, said the 2-year-old programme was a temporary measure and could not substitute for meeting Iraq's demand of lifting U.N. sanctions, which limit its oil exports.

"Iraq will not live forever with the oil-for-food programme. So, our demand is... to lift the sanctions," he said.

Saleh did not say whether

Iraq will accept a renewal of the current phase of the programme — which allows the country to export oil worth \$5.2 million over six months — when it expires in May.

The trade minister made the remarks at a news conference to clarify comments he made Sunday in an interview with Associated Press Television News in which he said Iraq rejected continuation of the oil-for-food programme.

"Iraq refuses the continuation of this project and demands lifting of sanctions, and this means the ouster of U.N. teams which supervise it," he said in the interview Sunday.

The programme, which is an exception to trade sanctions imposed on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, allows the country to export limited amounts of oil to buy food and medicines for the 22 million Iraqis who have been hard hit by the sanctions.

In his remarks to APTN Sunday, Saleh set no date for expelling the humanitarian workers, but complained that too little of the money from the sale of oil went to the Iraqi people and too much to administration.

"Iraq is bearing huge expenses which it pays to these [U.N.] personnel, and they do nothing apart from verifying

that the imports have reached Iraqi ports," he said.

On Monday, however, he said that the 400 U.N. workers supervising the programme would remain in Iraq as long as the program continues.

Iraq has taken a harder line toward the United Nations since four days of U.S. and British airstrikes aimed at punishing the Baghdad regime for failing to cooperate with U.N. weapons inspectors. The bombardment ended Dec. 19.

Baghdad's first response to the airstrikes was to ban the inspectors from returning to Iraq. On Saturday, Iraq said it would fire on U.S. and British warplanes patrolling skies

over northern and southern Iraq.

State-run Iraqi newspapers on Monday hailed the support the country received a day earlier from Arab legislators in Amman, Jordan.

Delegations from 16 members of the Arab Parliamentary Union's 19 member states on Sunday condemned the airstrikes as "unjust U.S.-British aggression" and urged their governments to work toward lifting the U.N. sanctions on Iraq.

Their recommendation, however, fell short of Iraq's demand that Arab countries begin circumventing the sanctions.

## Israeli parties agree to election date

(Continued from page 1)

"The political leadership will decide on the issue of the declaration of the Palestinian state in accordance with the national interests of the Palestinian people," Hassan Asfour told The Associated Press, when asked whether Arafat was still wedded to a May 4 independence declaration. Netanyahu said Sunday reports that Arafat would back off the May 4 declaration were proof that the opposition Labour party was colluding with Arafat in order to topple him.

"Arafat is considering postponing the declaration because of the elections," Netanyahu told his Likud party's central committee. "He wants to hold final status discussions with a left-wing government."

Labour Party leader Ehud Barak described that as "incitement" typical of Netanyahu's political style.

A later elections date will also help contain the threat to both major parties posed by the

probable candidacy of a popular general.

Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, the former chief-of-staff, has been leading both Netanyahu and Labour party leader Ehud Barak in the polls — largely because as a soldier, he was prohibited from making political statements, and was able to remain above the fray.

Shahak retired his uniform last week to declare his interest in joining an as yet-unformed centrist party.

Barak and Netanyahu both hope that a long elections campaign will force Shahak to make his opinions clear, and shave his support in the polls.

The parties set June 1 as a run-off date if neither candidate gets a clear majority.

Begin declares candidacy

Earlier Monday, in the third challenge to Netanyahu from a Likud scion, the only son of Menachem Begin on Monday declared his candidacy for prime minister. Benny Begin's

candidacy underscored the prime minister's growing isolation in the party his father once led, although the younger Begin lacks popular appeal.

Another Likud breakaway, former Finance Minister Dan Meridor, is running for prime minister on a centrist slate. Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and Communications Minister Limor Livnat are debating whether to leave the Likud, possibly to join Meridor.

Netanyahu is also being challenged from within the party by Uzi Landau, a hard-liner who, like Begin, opposes ceding further lands to the Palestinians. Landau has little chance, but it is practically unheard of for a sitting prime minister to be challenged within his party.

Netanyahu denied that his support within the party was collapsing. "The party is very solid and very unified around the direction we have taken to bring Israel peace and security," he said Monday.

## 'JTC value was underestimated'

(Continued from page 1)

"The security issue is very important. National communications are very sensitive and they must stay in the government's hand," Shukri stressed.

He said that the corporation will offer mobile phone service within six months at very competitive prices.

He added that "the service, scheduled to be provided after the end of Fastlink's Nov. 1, 1998 exclusivity period, was delayed because Fastlink filed a lawsuit at the Higher Court of Justice, which recently ruled that it had no jurisdiction over the dispute."

Industry sources said they expect the JTC to form a subsidiary to run the mobile and other services.

Shukri said the government last week issued the JTC with a licence to operate the country's second mobile phone service. But he said he has some observations on the terms of the licence that he will submit to the government soon.

He did not say what these reservations were.

Shukri also revealed that international telephone

charges will be lowered in the first quarter of 1999 — a move aimed at balancing domestic and international tariffs.

The decision to suspend the telecommunications sale signalled the end of a stormy process, thrown off course nearly a time in the last two years, when the privatisation process started in earnest.

But the suspension also carried a cost, critics of the move said.

The government, proponents maintain, missed a golden opportunity to bring in an international carrier to upgrade the services of the firm and introduce a business plan to take the company smoothly into the post-2002 era, which marks the end of the firm's exclusivity period.

Proponents of the sale also say the government lost out on hundreds of millions of dollars and has put into question the country's commitment to the privatisation programme, already marred by a fiery political debate.

The government decision to suspend the sale was widely welcomed by lawmakers and many in the industry.

## Meeting of Arab ministers postponed to January

(Continued from page 1)

The diplomats said Saudi Arabia was concerned a summit would degenerate into conflict or end with statements of support for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Saudi Arabia is concerned lest a summit call for a lifting of U.N. sanctions on Iraq — an issue Riyadh believes should be handled by the United Nations.

"Saudi Arabia and Kuwait believe the situation in Iraq is linked to the application by this country of all international resolutions," said an Arab diplomat.

It is not only conservative Gulf oil states which have reservations about holding an Arab summit to discuss the Iraq situation, which could be interpreted as support for Iraq.

Mubarak himself launched a strong attack on Baghdad Sunday, saying Egypt's opposition to U.S. and British air strikes should not be mistaken

for support for the Iraqi government, which he said was "at the root of all the problems."

"We opposed the air attack Britain and the United States launched against Iraq from the start because in the final reckoning it's the people of Iraq who pay the price," he said in an interview for Monday's edition of the government daily Al Gumburiya.

Plans for a summit have also faltered over some countries' objections to Iraq's participation.

In an apparent reference to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, Mubarak's political adviser Osama Al Baz said late Sunday it was "not realistic" to expect some countries to take part in a meeting attended by the Iraqi leadership.

Iraq itself appeared to challenge the notion of a summit on Sunday, saying it would be pointless unless it resulted in an agreement by all Arab countries to violate the U.N. sanctions against it.

## Driver follows navigation system into river

BONN (R) — A German motorist obediently following the satellite-guided navigation system of his car drove straight into the Havel River in eastern Germany, police said Saturday. He drove his BMW Friday night past a stop sign, down a ferry ramp and about four meters into the river before stopping. The 57-year-old driver from Hamburg and his passenger were not hurt. Police said the driver reported he was following the navigation system, which had evidently failed to note that the road in the town of Caputh near Potsdam ended at a ferry crossing.

## Ghostly visit begets world's longest hair

CHIANG MAI (R) — Thanks to a close encounter with a ghost 50 years ago, Hmong tribesman Lu Seng La is today a famous man. Ripley's Believe It or Not! the American authority on human and other oddities, has just declared the Thai septuagenarian as possessor of the world's longest hair. "When I was 18, I got annoyed with my shoulder-length hair and cut it. But I became very ill soon after that," he told Reuters as proud family members rolled out all 3.87 metres of his matted brown-black hair. "It was about to die when the spirit of a ghost entered me and demanded to use my body as a medium. But it ordered me never to cut my hair forever."

## Four-year-old tells Annan to 'make up' with Saddam

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Among the many letters sent daily to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan was one from a 4-year-old boy who told him to "make up and work it out" with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. The New York child, Luca Olson Duffy, who gave his age as four years and 11 months said: "Dear Mr. Annan, Please talk to the president of Iraq. Please make up. Work it out. Lucas." In reply, Annan sent a handwritten letter, saying "I am glad to see that one is never too young to speak out for peace. I promise you I will work very hard for peace in Iraq and everywhere else in the world."

## Police nab pigeon kidnappers

TAIPEI (R) — Police freed 41 pigeons and arrested seven people who made a fortune by kidnapping the birds, local media reported Saturday. Police were quoted as saying the seven suspects have made \$1.5 million in ransom money since 1996 for kidnapping pigeons trained for races. Pigeon-racing is popular in Taiwan and the games are often marred by gambling and other scandals. Local reports said pigeon owners usually comply with the kidnappers' demands in order to save the lives of their star pigeons.

## Anti-AIDS activist construct giant condom

BOGOTA (AP) — Size does matter — at least as far as Colombian AIDS activists are concerned. The activists paraded an enormous inflated condom through the streets of the country's third largest city Sunday hoping to draw attention to the threat of AIDS. "The idea is for people to realise that the disease exists, that it's here, and that it represents a far greater threat than the condom we're displaying," Dr. John Jairo Palacio told reporters. The mock prophylactic, which weighed roughly 1,500 kilograms, stretched over a one kilometre down a holiday street fair in Cali, a city of two million inhabitants.



An impoverished Iraqi woman walks with her two children in a Baghdad street on Monday (Reuters photo)

## Iraq's child beggars face perilous future

By Stuart Wallace  
AFP

BAGHDAD — A seven-year-old Iraqi girl stands on a street corner in Baghdad selling incense sticks. Her younger brother begs nearby from the long line of battered cars that has stopped at the traffic light. Both are their family's main source of income and both are child beggars of the type that can be found all over the capital and in countless other Iraqi cities and towns.

"I'm here all day except Fridays when my mum takes me to the mosque," said five-year-old Mohammad. "Sometimes people give me some money, sometimes it's food or sweets. Most people give me nothing," the barefoot child said.

Born after United Nations sanctions were imposed in 1990, many Iraqi children have grown up in poverty, with little health care and rampant malnutrition. Pressed into work at an age when Western children would be starting primary school, few are educated.

Many schools have closed from lack of maintenance. Even if the children wanted to go to school their families could not afford it. Government subsidies are low and the costs of school supplies or even shoes, clothes and transport are high.

Technically, child begging is

illegal, but "it is not enforced. Parents used to be jailed for allowing their children to beg or work. That rarely happens now," said a spokeswoman for the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Baghdad.

Caught between the need to educate and the battle to fight poverty, the authorities have been left with little choice but to turn a blind eye.

According to UNICEF as many as one million children missed the 1997-1998 school year in a country which once boasted one of the best education systems in the Middle East.

It is a far cry from life in Iraq just a few years ago. "Before the Gulf war it used to be an ordeal to find a family living in absolute poverty in Baghdad. There were a few, but not many. Now we are swamped," the UNICEF spokeswoman said.

"The middle class has ceased to exist, now there is only the poor and the upper class. You find architects and airline pilots driving taxis — our Iraqi drivers have masters degrees in engineering," she said.

Street work is hard at the best of times. Pollution, heat and cold compete with the fast moving traffic to ensure that the children's lives are fraught with danger.

But there are other, less visible, risks. Diseases like cholera and typhoid were practically

unknown in Iraq before sanctions. Although they have yet to reach epidemic proportions, they are now widespread and deadly.

"They re-emerged almost immediately as the country's infrastructure broke down and could not be repaired. We used to bring in the vaccines but that task has now been handed back to the government," the UNICEF spokeswoman said.

The handover came following the introduction of the U.N. oil-for-food programme in December 1996 that allows Iraq to sell limited quantities of crude in return for basic products including food and medicine.

The programme's success has been questionable with long delays in the approval of contracts and the delivery and distribution of products.

Tough though life may be for many of Iraq's urban children, conditions for their counterparts in the three northern autonomous Kurdish provinces of Iraq are worse.

Having fled the unrest that has rocked the region, many now live in the squalor of refugee camps and face the lack of hygiene, food and medical supplies that entails.

"We just don't know when all of this will end. Right now, we are working in an emergency situation where the immediate aim is simply to contain the problem," the UNICEF spokeswoman said.